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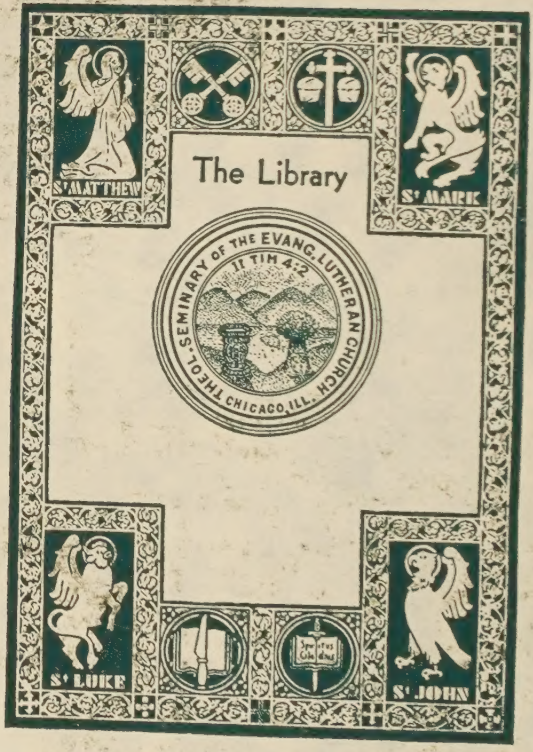
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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

AND ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

MANDELL CREIGHTON

THE FRIEND OF UNFORGOTTEN YEARS

PREFACE

THESE volumes represent the Gifford Lectures delivered at Edinburgh in 1904 and 1905. With some hesitation I have decided to retain the lecture form in which they were given. But they have been rearranged with more regard to unity of subject and less to uniformity of length, and considerable additions have been made. Thus the first series of ten lectures condenses into nine, while the second, also of ten, is expanded into seventeen.

The plan of the work and the point of view taken are set forth in the first Lecture, so that I need add nothing here. As regards the many omissions that will be found in it, there are two things to be said. Though I have found the restrictions of a Gifford Lecturer distinctly helpful in the examination of some religious beliefs, they have obliged me to leave others undiscussed. If I have drawn the line too narrowly, it was better to do this than to overpass my limits. Besides this, the entire work is no more than an outline of a great subject. All that could be done within reasonable compass was to state the main positions and trace the main course of the development; and this is all that I have attempted to do.

Among books which have appeared since the relevant parts of this work were in type, a high place must be given to Mr. Storr's *Development and Divine Purpose*; but perhaps Dr. Ferries' *Growth of Christian Faith* (just published) will prove the most important. So suggestive a book needs more than one reading: but I think we need his teaching that the knowledge of God in the man of our time must commonly be a quiet evolution of an initial love of right and truth: and that a good deal of moral training (more than we commonly suppose) is needed before we can gain help from some facts of religion.

For other reasons, Dr. M'Taggart's *Some Dogmas of Religion* cannot be left unnoticed. Much that he says is excellent, and many things are admirably stated. But generally the land he shows us is a very dream-land of

"Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire."

He reduces everything to metaphysics, rejecting "ethical arguments" as worthless, and seems to think one theory as good as another, if there is no metaphysical demonstration of its untruth. He argues freely from physical evil to moral evil; as if there were no serious difference between results of the system which are unpleasant to ourselves and the disturbance of it by wrong action. Were this distinction admitted, the inference of design would be much stronger than Dr. M'Taggart allows; and he could not safely argue that a God who permits "the smallest pang of toothache" may be telling us lies wholesale, perhaps because it is the best thing he can do for us. Other questions we must pass by; but to his

"ultimate" theory that the universe may be a harmonious system of persons with a tendency to improvement, I have no objection; only two comments. 1. Any theory is impregnable if it can be presented as ultimate, namely, —as one we have no faculties to discuss further. But while the action of a single will is confessedly such a theory, the harmonious action of many wills (including our own) seems eminently a subject for further investigation. If the theory is true, it cannot be ultimate. 2. If it is not ultimate, the unity of things postulated by thought and verified by science (of which Dr. M'Taggart takes no account) forces us to the conclusion that one of those wills belongs to an all-sovereign[1] Ruler.

A few sentences are repeated from earlier works. I have not thought it worth while to rewrite them simply for the sake of novelty; but they have always been revised.

My obligations are too many and too various for full enumeration. It may suffice here to say that the most pervasive influences are those of Professor Campbell Fraser and Bishop Westcott; and in particular chapters I owe much to (amongst others) Professors Jevons of Durham and Allen of Cambridge, Mass., to Dr. Harnack, and to the Master of Balliol. My best thanks are due for oral criticism to Miss F. M. Stawell, the late Forbes Robinson, and Miss Edith Harington;

[1] Nicene Creed and N.T. *παντοκράτορα*, not *παντοδύναμον*,—a favourite point of Westcott's. In any case God is limited by every attribute we ascribe to him. An omnipotent God, in Dr. M'Taggart's sense, is an absurdity not worth his elaborate refutation.

and also to my wife for looking over the proofs. I have also taken careful account of the criticism of certain Jesuits in Scotland, and the resulting changes are sometimes in the desired direction.

GRANGE OVER SANDS,
Easter Eve, 1906.

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בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם

εἰπεῖν· γῆς παῖς εἰμὶ καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον· τόδε δ' ἴστε καὶ αὐτοί.

ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον
ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

My first duty here is to express my feeling of deep responsibility for the charge entrusted to me on behalf of the University of Edinburgh, to lay before you without fear or favour, affection or misliking, the best our God has given me to know upon the weighty subject of Natural Theology; and I pray him to give me strength and wisdom, that my words may not be quite unworthy of the great men who have spoken from this place before me.

Turning then, like my predecessors, to Lord Gifford's Deed of Foundation, I notice at once his direction "to treat this greatest of all possible sciences, and indeed in one sense the only science, as a strictly natural science, without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation": and this direction I heartily accept. If I believe, as indeed I do believe, that the man who spake as never man spake also did the works which

none other man did, I believe also that if we take a system as a whole and on its own shewing, it ought provisionally to justify itself as a reasonable possibility before we come to the particular evidence alleged in its favour. For instance, the historical fact of Christ's resurrection is an essential part of any system that can reasonably be called Christian; and if true, it must be the central fact of history. Still, if we leave disputed historical facts in suspense, the system as a whole, specially including that resurrection represented as the pledge of life won through death, ought to shew itself such a reasonable scheme as may possibly prove true when we come to the particular evidence for those facts. In other words, we can discuss Christianity to a certain distance without accepting its alleged miracles as true; but we cannot discuss it at all without accepting them as parts of the system. If we leave them out of it we shall not be discussing Christianity, but some figment of our own.

I understand then that Natural Theology is to be dealt with in a scientific spirit, "like astronomy or chemistry," as our Founder says, and therefore with a reasonable regard to the particular nature of its subject-matter, and with liberty to take account of any facts whatever which may seem to bear on it. And if ideas suggested by Christian teaching, for example, commend themselves to us on independent grounds, they ought not to be prejudiced by the fact that they have likewise commended themselves to a majority of civilized and thinking men ever since the third century.

An alleged special revelation, whatever it be, is in

any case historical evidence that certain beliefs have been held: and as I read further, I am encouraged "freely to discuss the nature, origin, and truth" of such beliefs—but as I understand, on grounds of reason only, without reference to (meaning reliance upon) any personal or institutional authority. All evidence of reason is admissible, but all authority must go for nothing. By grounds of reason I mean all facts of whatever nature which reason may judge relevant to the question in hand; and by reliance on authority I mean all weight allowed to the beliefs of persons or the teachings of institutions beyond their reasonable value as personal testimony. Such beliefs or teachings will often raise a presumption—sometimes a strong presumption—that we shall find evidence, and in some cases they lay us under a serious obligation to see for ourselves how the evidence really lies; but evidence they are not, except so far as they stand for personal testimony. Reliance on authority instead of reason is often passed off as a modest deference to skilled opinion; in fact, it is pure scepticism.

An unhesitating appeal to reason as our only test of truth seems to be not only an admissible method of study, but the only method of study consistent with regard to truth, and the only method which can issue in serious beliefs. I am aware that it has not always found favour among Christians—the Latin Church in particular has usually sided with the Pharisees in rejecting it — but it was the method of Jesus of Nazareth, who came, as he said, that he might bear witness of the truth, and never based his teaching on

any *more* authority of his own. Positive as that teaching is, for he never hints a doubt, or even speaks the word Peradventure, he offers every word he speaks to the judgment of reason, and in every word assumes that reason is able to judge of truth presented to it. To reason—the verdict of the whole man—he appeals throughout; and no man who bears his name need grudge at having to lay his own appeal before the same supreme and final court of judgment.

This may be the place to note that in the phrase "special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation," Lord Gifford seems to identify a special with a miraculous revelation. If so, I do not feel bound to follow him in this particular use of words. A revelation may, for aught we know yet, be special without being miraculous: and in any case the two ideas will most conveniently be kept apart till we come to the question whether they are really distinct.

There is one thing more to be said before we leave the Deed of Foundation. I notice the Founder's direction that these lectures are to be public and popular, and open to all comers. This direction I will endeavour to obey by making myself as plain as I can to the "general and popular audience" of which he speaks, without parade of learning and without straining after novelty. Natural Theology is a very old battle-ground: its questions have been again and again fought out by the keenest intellects of all ages, and we cannot hope to do more than look at some of them from the particular standpoint of a

student of history in our own time. Our task will be rather the verification and re-survey of old truth than the more brilliant one of discovering new truth, though perhaps that also will not be wholly wanting.

Our subject being the Knowledge of God, we shall have to take account of all means by which men have in any age thought it possible to get such knowledge. But if there be knowledge on man's part, there must be revelation on God's part; for we cannot reasonably limit our conception of revelation to supposed special exceptional or miraculous communications. Any fact which gives knowledge is a revelation. If particular facts reveal God, they do so only by indicating a certain character; and though a miracle, if such there were, would be likely to command attention, there is no reason why it should indicate character more distinctly than common facts. If so, revelation and the knowledge of God are correlative terms expressing two sides of the same thing, and equally related to all things which can in any way give that knowledge.

To sum up the proposed investigation at once, we shall first discuss very shortly the question whether revelation in the wide sense just given is possible, and then first examine its nature (supposed possible) and the form which it may be expected to take, so far as it can be discussed on grounds of reason only. Afterwards, and this will be the second part of our work, we shall have to compare our results with the conceptions of it which men have actually formed.

Our object in taking shortly the possibility of reve-

lation is simply to keep the work before us within reasonable bounds. It would have been still shorter to assume it summarily: and we might fairly have done so, for if men have any knowledge even of God's existence, they can only get it from facts which indicate it: and these facts, whatever they be, will constitute a revelation. But we shall find it better formally to review the assumptions implied in that possibility, because the conditions on which revelation depends may be our best guide to its nature. The study of this will be the hardest part of our work, for we are at once confronted with Butler's warning, that we are not competent judges beforehand of what may be expected in a revelation. That is true, in the sense Butler meant it; but it is not strictly pertinent, for his controversy with the Deists was about a particular revelation, so that the larger problem we have to deal with was not fully before him. Moreover it was not so much his business to find out how much can be said, as to shew that certain things cannot safely be said. It may be that we shall find some help not only in Butler's own argument, but in things that were unknown or obscure in Butler's time. At all events, we are free to ask questions and find for ourselves the limits of our knowledge. For example, if there be a revelation, what will be its main purpose? To what faculties will it speak, and how will it be related to common knowledge? Will it be general or special, or both in different parts? Will it be delivered once for all complete, or will it be in any way a subject of development? Can we see any lines which it is likely to follow, or any which it will certainly not

follow? Though full answers to questions like these may be far beyond our reach, I have confidence that reverent and careful study will not be thrown away on them. Butler was right in pleading the ignorance of man, or more precisely our incompetency through ignorance, against the hasty theorizing of the Deists; yet there was something in their shallow optimism which we have hardly mastered even yet. We stand indeed on higher ground than Butler, for the revolutions of the nineteenth century have been a mighty revelation. They have thrown forward with impressive emphasis the old Teutonic thought of progress and development, and the old Christian teaching of the dignity and worth of man as man, or as the Christians would say, in virtue of the image of God within him. If science has firmly linked our body to the beasts that perish, anti-christian thought itself at times has donned the prophet's mantle, discoursing of our true affinity and likeness to the mysterious force that works behind that veil of Isis which no mortal has lifted yet. Looking backward to the marvellous things our fathers witnessed, and forward to the still mightier changes dawning on our children, it would seem that the time is come to take up the other side of Butler's work, and once more essay the problem of the Deists, with more of knowledge, and less I hope of random speculation.

After we have formed the best idea we can form beforehand of revelation, we shall have to compare with it the conceptions we find in history. On this part of our work it will be enough for the present to say that I shall devote myself chiefly to the three great lines

of ancient thought significantly joined by Pilate's title written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and to the Christian developments which came after them, including in the latter much semichristian and some antichristian thought. Of India and China I am not competent to speak at first hand; and other old religions are of less importance. Excepting Egypt and Persia, they mostly stand aside from the main course of history. Many of them indeed are too crude to help us much, for it is a great mistake of method to explain higher developments by lower, instead of lower by higher. Symbols may indicate realities, but the realities must interpret symbols. In any case we shall not lose much by a certain limitation of our work, for it is historically evident that the triple cord of ancient thought united in the Gospel has been the main line of the development of human thought in matters of religion.

Waiving, then, the argument that the possibility of revelation, if not the fact of it, can hardly be disputed if there is any truth at all in religion, or even in science, it may be convenient now to run over formally the conditions of its possibility. These are four in number. If there is a God—a personal Being above us and not below us—I think we may take it as possible that he may have something to reveal; and then if he is able to reveal it, if he may be supposed willing to do so, and if man is able to receive it—on these four conditions revelation is possible, and the question whether and how far there is a revelation in such and such facts is simply a question of evidence. A full discussion of these conditions would carry us too far; but we shall have to

notice the general character of the arguments which seem to bear on them.

When I speak of God, I mean a personal Being above us and not below us, a Being to whose greatness religion pointed from the first, and in whose goodness it has more and more in the course of ages found its final rest and peace. All religion (as distinct from magic) is a trustful communion with some such Being, however it may be debased by mean conceptions of what is great or good. It is not pure brute force before which the savage crouches; and civilized peoples always looked for something better in their gods. In beasts they worshipped knowledge beyond their own, and in men they reverenced wisdom and beauty quite as much as mere strength, and even those who stripped their God of human feeling thought him so much the greater for the want of it. The nobler the man, the purer his worship, the more clearly we see the soaring aspiration of all reasoning religion to a Being whose goodness around us bears witness to his greatness above us. It was a new thing in modern times when the unreason of the Agnostic and the Pessimist looked downward for a deity instead of upward. They do well to call it the Unknowable or the Unconscious, for they would only make confusion if they took the name of God in vain by using it of something lower than the beasts of Egypt.

The existence of God cannot be logically demonstrated. There are many proofs, but there is no demonstration; and those who insist on having one must be plainly told that we have none to give. But neither can we logically demonstrate the existence of self or of the world—of

the subject or the object, if we prefer the philosophical terms. We cannot deduce it by self-evident logic in the style of Euclid, because we have no self-evident axioms behind it. The world and self and God are alike in being final postulates of thought, and therefore incapable of demonstration, so that a man who takes no other proof is bound to deny them all, as in fact they have all been denied by various forms of ancient and modern scepticism. The existence of God is not the less certain for being the necessary postulate of every argument instead of the logical conclusion of one argument. The uniformity of nature, which some set against it, is a postulate also assumed without demonstration. Each of them is an assumption—a theory if you will—and there can be no logical demonstration of a theory. The only proof of it we can have is when we find that it describes facts, or in common language, explains facts. Such proof is always open to objection; but in proper kind and quantity it is conclusive to every man in his right mind.

We are not taking the immoral position that insufficient evidence may be treated as sufficient; but we cannot help seeing that evidence which is not demonstrative is accepted as sufficient in almost every act of life. Neither do we hold, as some slander us, that the wish to believe is the right to believe; but we do contend that every question must be determined by the sort of evidence corresponding to its nature, and that we have no right to demand some other sort. Thus we accept the theory of gravitation because it describes a vast number of relevant facts; and we reject that of

transubstantiation because it explains nothing but the one difficulty it was invented to explain, and only explains that at the cost of much irrationality. A theory is easily fitted to any one difficulty; the test of it is its explanation of other difficulties. Now the existence of God is a theory which explains a world-wide mass of facts, for though the presence of sin is a real difficulty, we shall see that there is no reason to think it fatal. The silence of science is not even a difficulty. If Laplace was right in saying that science has neither need nor room for God, he was right only because the scope of science is limited. As commonly defined, it describes phenomena, not origins, and deals with sequences, never with true causation. Moreover, every science begins rightly enough by selecting some facts or aspects of facts as relevant, and setting aside others as irrelevant; and though one science will often take up factors rightly neglected by another, we have no security that science, meaning the sum of all the sciences, will somewhere or other take full account of all such factors. A method, then, which never gets beyond incomplete accounts of things cannot decently pretend to finish with complete descriptions of them. If the physicist finds no God, the reason may be, not that there is no God, but that it is no more his proper business than the coal-heaver's to look for God.

In fact, the question whether Science *can* have anything to say on "the hypothesis of a God" is simply a matter of definition. A great advance was made in the eighteenth century towards a clear separation between origins and causes on one side, phenomena and

sequences on the other—the one set of questions being assigned to philosophy and religion, the other reserved for science. This is the usual division, and much the most convenient, for it corresponds to a difference of subject-matter and a difference of method: for we cannot experiment on origins as we can on phenomena. The distinction is real; and if Religion used to ignore it, Science has no excuse for following her bad example now. The pretence of determining phenomena by religion, and the pretence of discovering origins by the methods of science, are returns to a pre-scientific past; and for unreason there is nothing to choose between them.

If then science is limited, as is now usual, to questions of phenomena and sequence, it manifestly cannot have anything to say on questions of cause and origin; and if we extended it to such questions we should need different methods, for we should have to take in many considerations rightly ruled out from an investigation limited to phenomena and sequences. There is no need for confusion, unless we assume either that there are no causes and origins, or that there are none which we can know. In that case, of course, nothing exists for us beyond sequences of events. Only our assumption is philosophical, not scientific, for a science of sequences only is self-condemned the moment it lays down any doctrine about causes and origins.

But the two theories of gravitation and of the existence of God are not on a level. Gravitation is only a provisional theory, good till something better is discovered, for nobody supposes it to be the complete

and final explanation of planetary and stellar motions. It is a theory which has described them excellently; but we assume without hesitation that there is something behind it, so that if ever we discover that something we shall be able to merge gravitation in some higher theory which will not only describe all that gravitation describes, but take in facts now unknown, or at least unknown in their connexion with astronomical phenomena. Yet even this higher theory will be as provisional as gravitation itself, and liable to displacement by some still higher theory. But the existence of God is a final theory, not simply because we cannot get beyond it, but because the personal action of such a Being is a true cause and final explanation of the universe, of persons as well as things. As all science assumes that nature is a rational system, so thought itself consciously or unconsciously assumes that there is a God. Atheism is not even untrue; it is universal confusion. If we think things out instead of stopping half way, we are driven to a theistic assumption.

Some theory we must make, if we are to reason at all. We may suppose that there is a God, or that there is no God; or we may set aside the question by supposing that we have no faculties to deal with it. Theism, Non-Theism, and Agnosticism are exactly alike in being theories, or rather groups of theories; and there is no reason for preferring one to another unless it describes facts better. They have all had supporters, and therefore presumably something to say for themselves; but Theism has been the creative force in history, and remains the general belief of serious men. Religion

without reason is painfully common, and reason without religion is not unknown; but there can be no rational religion outside Theism. The Pantheist cannot worship except so far as he personifies his god. The Agnostic has an ethical system he cannot make rational without a god; but he rightly refuses to worship the unknown Force he sets to hold the place of God. Others may have religions: only the Theist has a religion which can be rational.

If religion is not quite universal, it is very nearly universal. If tribes without religion can be found, they are found among the most degraded of savages. If individuals of the most cultivated nations tell us that they have no religion, what they tell us is not always the fact, for men often think they have no religion when they have only thrown off some particular religion. If indeed they have no religion, they have none only because they have really thrown it off. The atheist, like the Christian, is not born but made, though made by an opposite process. Buddhism is the only great system which can be said in any sense to ignore religion; and even that is no real growth of irreligion, but a religious reaction from an unsatisfactory religion, and soon gathered round it religious observances in abundance. Thus even Buddhism supports the general conclusion that religion is a primary instinct of human nature.

One of the simplest—as well as one of the deepest—arguments which point in the direction of Theism is the admitted fact appealed to by Lotze, Royce, and others, that things (including ourselves) influence each other in

definite ways, and are therefore not independent. Action between two independent things is not made possible by the mediation of a third thing or of any number of things which are *ex hypothesi* independent of both. Contact may be a condition of such action, but it is no sort of explanation of it. But if we suppose a relation of any kind between them, we must admit that they are not independent of each other. And if things are not independent of each other, they must all (including ourselves) be dependent on something else. If then they act on each other, they must be direct or indirect products or manifestations of one or more powers working through them; and ultimately of one power only, for independent powers are independent things and therefore impossible. And this power will on its side have relations to things, for relations cannot be one-sided, and will shew its unity, as all unity must be shewn, in the differences of things. And if the system is rational—and we cannot reason about it at all without assuming so much—we cannot escape the conclusion that the power behind it is also rational.

This may suffice to suggest a theory of a more or less theistic sort; but as we go further we are driven by many considerations to the more definite theory of a personal God.

We are driven to it by the moral necessity of finding for persons as well as things a cause beyond the scientific forces which cannot work themselves, and the scientific sequences which cannot be more than effects of deeper though still insufficient "causes." We are driven to it again for the origin of that life and consciousness which

no scientific alchemy has yet been able to derive from matter. Yet again we are driven to it for the origin of conscience with its mysterious whisperings of duty and with its Titanic tempests of remorse, which no Naturalistic sleight-of-hand can trace back to the great twin brethren, Matter and Force. Collateral products and psychophysical parallelism are words to conjure with; but no conjuring can get conscience out of matter. We are driven to our assumption by matter with its mysteries of order and development, by life with its mysteries of thought and conscience. Must we have logical demonstration of that which underlies logic, or must we see God in the sky, as Lalande scoffed, or get him into our laboratories for analysis, before we are persuaded? Christians are not the only people who walk by faith and not by sight. We all do it, and must do it every moment of our life. Even as we venture from step to step, whether of common life or of the abstrusest scientific argument, in faith that the sequences of nature will not fail us, so we wing our way from earth to heaven in faith that these sequences are not without a cause.

This is the theistic challenge; and, so far as I can find, it has never been answered.

Attempted replies have mostly confused the issue as between origin and development, cause and method, concrete facts and scientific abstractions; and some of them summarily forbid us to ask for causes at all. In fact, science as defined by its own advocates has nothing to do with cause or origin, and only deals with concrete facts by abstracting from them. For instance, there seems reason to believe that the sidereal universe is

finite, both in space and time; but if it were eternal, it would none the less need a cause. Given a series of sequences of which no one is caused by those before it, we do not reach a true cause by taking an infinite number of them. We do not solve a problem by the easy method of adjourning it to infinity. If a cause is needed for a finite series, it is equally needed for an infinite series; and no cause can be sufficient unless it works continuously along the series: and if matter and force do not now constitute such a cause, there is no reason to suppose that they ever did.

So too of life. If all life were definitely traced back to a single germ, that germ would still have to be accounted for, and would be no easier to account for than the whole complex of life which has arisen from it. Its "simplicity" would be delusive, involving as it would all that has ever been evolved from it. In the midst of inorganic matter it must have arisen, but as a solitary object of a higher order, for the gulf between is yet unbridged, and moreover never can be bridged, till scientific proof is found that matter is not inert, but can *of itself* produce life.[1] It is random guesswork to bring life hither in the crevices of a meteorite from some other world. Such a theory is full of difficulties, has no evidence in its favour, and at best only moves the

[1] It is too soon yet to judge whether Mr. Butler Burke's interesting discoveries will be finally verified. But if they are fully confirmed, as they very well may be, they will prove only that matter can produce life *under our* direction. The question whether it can produce life *of itself*—that is to say, without our direction, will stand exactly where it stood before. Should this second question ever be answered in the affirmative, it will be a result of the highest significance; but, as we shall see presently, it no way touches our argument. [1905.]

difficulty one step further back. And it is worse than random guesswork to lay down the law, that life "must" have come from matter, not on evidence, but simply to round off a theory.

Yet after all it matters little. Life is life, with all its mystery; and that mystery is no way diminished by any particular theory of its origin. If it did arise from matter, the right conclusion would not be that life is less wonderful, but that matter is more wonderful than we supposed. The mystery would remain exactly what it was before, and we should not have gained a single step towards an explanation of it. The only difference would be that we should cease to speak of matter as inert. The change might confound the Deist, who believes in a distant engineer; but the Christian might fairly reply, that he for one will not presume to decide what may or may not be produced from matter by the immanent working of a living God.

So also of conscience. Rudimentary it may have been, like other things in the far past, and some of its outcomes revolting; but there it was. The oldest Babylonians had a conscience as real as our own, for however their judgment of what is right or wrong may have differed from ours, they were just as clear as we are that some things are right and others wrong. Conscience may have been shaped historically by subtle selfishness and social sanctions; but it cannot be resolved into these, and indeed is often sternly opposed to both, and therefore cannot have been developed out of them. The particular judgments of right and wrong which these may explain are surface matters: the sense

itself of right and wrong is what has to be accounted for; and it is as distinct from the sense of utility as that is from the sense of beauty. There is no accounting for it as a function of animal life, far less as a function of matter. Physical processes belong to one order, the sense of guilt to another.

Coming now to the question whether God supposed existent is able to give a revelation, we are at once confronted with one of the most significant of all the facts we shall have to deal with. Every argument which goes to verify our assumption as regards the bare existence of God goes equally to prove that he is a God of a certain character, so that each as it is accepted compels us to say something definite about him. Thus if he is the final cause of all causes, he must have power to be a sufficient cause. If he is the ultimate origin of life and personality, he must have life and personality himself. If he has given us a moral sense, he must himself be its concrete embodiment. An agnostic attitude at this point is not even decently self-consistent. If a force works through all things, we ought to have ample material for finding out something of its nature; and if it is known to work by law, we know something about it, and it cannot be utterly inscrutable. The agnostic position is as if Euclid worked out his demonstration complete, and then turned round of a sudden to dispute the Q.E.D. He is not reasoning, but simply refusing to reason. When Herbert Spencer tells us that "the Power manifested throughout the universe, distinguished as material, is the same Power which in ourselves wells up in the form of

consciousness," he comes very near—if we will only think it out—to the Christian belief in "a universe which is everywhere alive," not with life of its own, but through the immanence of a living God. It is a juggle of words to answer that we have "no strict knowledge," meaning scientific knowledge. If we cannot weigh or analyse God, neither can we weigh or analyse many things whose existence is unquestioned — our neighbour's love or hatred, or indeed our neighbour himself, for example. We know them only by inference from outward signs; and if such knowledge is valid in their case, why should not similar knowledge of God be valid also? The only way in which the Agnostic can come to terms—after a fashion—with reason is by maintaining that partial knowledge is no knowledge at all; that if we do not know the ultimate mystery of a thing, we have no knowledge of it at all. And this is a position which destroys the reality of all knowledge, and therefore the validity of all reasoning; for if there is any one truth on which all serious thinkers are agreed, it is that no single thing is completely known to us. *Omnia abeunt in mysterium.* If therefore we cannot trust partial knowledge as far as it goes, there is nothing left which we can trust.

If God is the ultimate cause of matter, life, and conscience, it is hardly possible to dispute his power to give a revelation, if he so please. As we are making no suppositions about its character, we will not ask now whether matter, life, and conscience are not themselves a revelation; but surely the power which was able to cause man's existence must *a fortiori* be able to send

him a message. It need not be in spoken words, much less written in a book: anything whatever by which one person conveys his thought to another makes a message. The beasts can speak to us: is God lower than they? No matter yet whether man would be able to receive a message: our question is whether God would be able to send it. The only obstacle we can imagine is a severance between God and man so complete that even God cannot reach across it. Such a position might be taken with some show of reason by the Deist, who does make a severance as soon as he has got past the work of creation, though it is not open to the Agnostic, whose unknowable Force co-operates with all the forces of the physical world. Yet even the deistic severance will not suffice, for it is no result from the ultimate nature of things, or from any intrinsic fitness of right and wrong, but simply the present method of the divine government. So far from being unable to bridge it over, God has already reached across it, first in creation, then to give what the Deist calls natural religion, however unwilling he may be to give a further special revelation. However, the answer is simple. A severance which puts it beyond God's power to give a revelation must result from the ultimate nature of things, and equally put it beyond his power to cause the existence of the world. If he has ever touched the world at all, and still more if he is immanent in it, there can hardly be any reason beforehand for doubting his power to touch it for the purpose of giving a revelation. His willingness is another question, which comes next.

Is it, then, a tenable supposition that God may be willing to give a revelation? The question must be put quite generally, because for anything we know yet to the contrary there may be particular reasons why a particular revelation should not be given at a particular time, to particular men, or in a particular manner. If the Koran, for instance, be such a revelation, it might have been choked out between Rome and Persia before they were weakened and demoralized by the great strife of Chosroes and Heraclius; or if the Gospel, the fulness of time was hardly come for the universal Family till the universal Empire had arisen to clear the way. We can see that a message once impressed on stiff-necked Israel had a better prospect of safe keeping than in the hands of unstable Edom, and that a message given to Toltecs or Chinese might have taken centuries to reach the central shores of Greece and Syria; and it is equally clear that a mere worship or a mere philosophy which appealed to heart or mind alone would leave the half of human need unsatisfied, and that a message revealed only in flaming fire would have to be respectfully forgotten, if it was not to put reason to permanent confusion. But particular objections are not enough. Revelation cannot be pronounced impossible on the score of God's unwillingness unless some general objection can be shewn, covering either all times, all persons, all places, or all modes of action in the matter.

Such an objection is often found in a view of natural law widely current among ourselves. The world, it is said, is worked entirely by uniform natural sequence; and if there is a God to give a revelation, this uniform

natural sequence must express his nature, or at least his will, so that revelation being a breach of it is not only incredible but unthinkable, for it represents God as willing at once the sequence and the breach of it, which is absurd. This is the argument: and if uniform natural sequence fully expresses the will of God, and if revelation is a breach of it, there is no reply. Bradlaugh's picture of the great monkey in heaven stood so far for perfectly sound argument. It was a fair caricature, all the more offensive for its truth, of the irrational idea, still very common among Christians, that the proof of revelation lies precisely on this, that it breaks the natural sequence. Well, does it? In the first place, the world is not entirely worked by uniform natural sequence, unless our consciousness of freedom is a delusion, for natural sequence is deflected at every moment when forces are co-ordinated by personal action. I cannot even catch a ball without so co-ordinating the action of my arms as to deflect the natural sequence that a ball thrown up falls to the ground; but the "law" of gravitation is not broken, for the weight on my hand shows that it is acting still. If the answer be that personal action must be included in our conception of what is natural, this may be granted as a matter of definition. Only, in that case any similar co-ordinating action of a personal God (if such there be) must be included as well as our own. The decisive question is not the definition of words, but the reality of freedom, divine and human. If God and man are not entirely subject to the uniform sequences we find in the physical world, the result of personal action differs from that which uniform sequence would

otherwise give; and this difference is not abolished when both are included in one definition. Is there or is there not a breach of sequence when it is deflected by personal action? If there is, we must cease to speak of sequence as uniform, for we see such breaches every day. If not, then even so-called miracles considered as personal action are so far credible beforehand. It may indeed be said that while man's action is uncertain, God cannot be supposed to vary from his own law. But the "law" of the physical world is not a self-acting force: it is only a theory of our own to describe sequences imperfectly known; and there is no reason to think that with our present powers we shall ever come to a perfect knowledge of them. Natural "law" not including personal action cannot be a perfect expression of God's nature or will, though it must be true so far as it goes. At all events, the part of it known to us cannot be more than an imperfect expression which leaves room for a further expression by other means, if other means there be. Any such further expression must of course harmonize with that already known; but we may expect it to give us a different point of view, and most likely not to be another such series of uniform sequences as we find in the physical world. If natural "law" is to be a perfect expression of God's nature or will, it must include personal action, and that as its highest part; and if freedom is real—a fact we know as directly as we know any natural sequence—personal action is not uniform. If therefore natural "law," so far as we know it, is not uniform in its highest part, we have no right to assume that a fuller knowledge

of the universe would reveal to us nothing but uniformity. To put it shortly, any further expression there may be will not contradict what we know already; but we cannot take for granted that it will follow the lower line of uniformity rather than the higher line of freedom.

A second objection came into view with the Copernican astronomy, played a great part in the eighteenth century, and underlies much current thought in our own time, though it does not always come to the surface. We are told that if the earth were the centre of the universe, with sun, moon, and stars created to give it light, man as its ruler would hold a position of great dignity, and might possibly be not unworthy to receive a revelation; but it is absurd to suppose that the ruler of the great sidereal system would give one to the inhabitants of an insignificant planet like this—one among millions, and one of the least of them. Now let us look at the ideas which are needed to make this objection reasonable. It must be thought, then, that the importance of heavenly bodies varies in a general way with their size, so that while the sun is more important than the earth, Arcturus and Capella are likely to be more important than the sun. It is also supposed that there must be an indefinite number of stars, or at least planets, inhabited like the earth. It is further assumed that God's care is limited to great things, and it is taken for granted that spirit in man has no indefinite superiority over matter.

Without these assumptions the objection falls at once; yet none of them can be proved, and such knowledge as

we have weighs heavily against all but one of them. It is certain of sun, moon, and stars, and nearly certain of the planets (Mars and Venus at most excepted), that they are no seats of any life at all like ours. Stars no doubt may have planets, and if none are known the fault may be in our telescopes; but if their history resembles the earth's, very few of them can at a given time be in the particular stage of evolution suited for any such life as ours. However, it is hardly worth while to discuss hypothetical inhabitants of hypothetical planets. Nor does the theory of evolution give any countenance to the belief that life is not of a higher order than matter. As we shall see presently, its results point with emphasis the other way, and if this be so the earth with life may be of more worth than the rest of the universe without life. But the worst fallacy is the assumption that God cares only for great things. A more unscientific position could hardly be imagined. There is no careless work in Nature. A gnat is made as accurately as a man, a microscopic *Heliopelta* turned as skilfully as a watchcase. If there is a God at all, things like these must be his doing, by whatever laws he does them. And if the evidence is overwhelming, that the minute things of the earth are not beneath his attention, we cannot assume that the earth itself and man are in such sense insignificant as to make it likely beforehand that he is too full of other work to give a revelation. This difficulty at all events is imaginary.

A third objection is less commonly made, though to my own mind it seems to raise more serious doubts than either of the former. What of sin? By sin I mean

something more than the existence of ignorance and animal passion, and something different from physical evil, and from the unripeness and imperfection of our present stage of growth. I mean the fact witnessed by conscience, that by fault of our own we are very far gone from the moral law which is written in our hearts. We are not now concerned with the evolution of sin, on which science has thrown such unexpected light, or with its relation to the neutral passions of the animal nature, but simply with the present fact of its existence. This is a fact with which many schools of thought have dealt superficially. It is meaningless, of course, to those who deny the existence of a moral law, or seek refuge from it in some theory of determinism. Let them make their peace as best they can with the awful figure of Remorse, the horrible Medusa's head which once revealed, the mightiest passions of human nature, and "the will to live" itself, fall dead before it. Others also, men of just renown, have practically explained away the idea of sin. Ovid is not counted among the philosophers, yet there is a deeper thought in his

> Video meliora proboque,
> Deteriora sequor

than in the resolution of sin into ignorance by Socrates, which seems to miss its relation to the will. Sin is not indeed the primary fact of human nature, and it would be a great mistake to base religion on the consciousness of sin; but we have reason to think it a very grave fact, especially when we consider in the light of modern science the far-reaching and enduring consequences of personal action. If the moral law be any expression of

God's nature, or even of his will, it cannot be a matter of indifference to him that we have disobeyed the law which he set before us, and done all the evil that is done on the face of the earth. There is something, however, to set against this; for if our evil-doing is an offence which may, for aught we know, keep back a revelation, the evil condition into which we have brought ourselves is an appeal to him which may, for aught we know, call forth a revelation beyond that which is implied in the very fact of disobedience. Be that as it may, the existence of sin would seem at all events fatal to any summary assumption that he *must* give some further revelation. All that can be added at this stage of the argument is that neither is it safe to dogmatize the other way, by laying down for certain that he will not.

Our last question remains. If the possibility of revelation is not hindered by any want of power or want of willingness on God's part to give it, may it not be hindered notwithstanding by want of power on man's part to receive it? Want of willingness on his part, and the extent to which it may defeat the purpose (whatever that be) of the revelation, we need not now discuss; for if a revelation is given at all, it is equally given whether man will hear or whether he will forbear. But supposing him willing to receive a revelation, has he the power? Such power cannot be less than power to verify its rationality, its origin, and its moral character, and to understand what it requires us to be or to do. Some find that power in the understanding only, others in the convergent faculties of the whole man, others again in some peculiar and mysterious

power of intuition; so that there is a very considerable body of somewhat miscellaneous opinion agreed that in one way or another he has the power required. But at opposite ends of the scale stand two groups of thinkers who deny it. Extremes meet, as usual; and are more nearly allied to each other than to intermediate forms of thought. The Agnostics of belief and the Agnostics of unbelief are heartily agreed that man as man has no faculties to receive a revelation. This fundamental position they hold in common, and there the wiser of them stop. It is a secondary development when others introduce an infallible authority of some sort, somehow (which on their theory must mean miraculously) empowered to declare the truth, and therefore claiming from us obedience without regard to reason, which they consider essentially misleading. Both groups are entangled in the general bad logic of Agnosticism, which makes the fact that we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection an excuse for not trying to find out anything at all. But the more advanced group is hampered by the further difficulty that the infallible authority which is to be obeyed without regard to reason cannot be recognized except by reason; and the reason which is not competent to recognize a revelation must be equally incompetent to recognize an authority which can only be declared by revelation.

Upon the whole there appears to be no proof that a revelation is impossible. We shall therefore go on to study its nature as that of something we may find in history, without any misgivings that we are discussing an impossible conception, a *Chimæra bombinans in vacuo.*

LECTURE II.

FIRST CONSIDERATIONS.

THOUGH most persons who are not Agnostics will agree that it is legitimate and often very necessary to ask whether an alleged revelation is what it professes to be, there are many who shrink from the cognate and indeed preliminary question, what may be expected beforehand from a revelation, and what sort of line it is likely to take. In practice they will often argue with some boldness from the natural fitness of things, as that a revelation must be perfectly clear, or that it must be given alike to all men, or again that it must constitute some infallible authority or be embodied in an infallible book, or lay down some system of government in Church or State, or ordain some authoritative ceremonial of sacrifice or other worship—on the ground that it is the necessary business of a revelation to settle things like these beyond the risk of mistake. They will build whole systems without hesitation on assumptions of this kind as self-evident truths; yet when they are fairly confronted with the question, the men who were so positive just now will sometimes answer piously, that it would be rash to say beforehand what a revelation will be like, for we really have no faculties to deal

with such a question. It will be whatever God may please to give us; and this is all that we can know beforehand.

It must be granted that in all ages much rashness has been committed in the matter. The natural man likes to walk by sight and not by faith, and never quite understands that a mystery is of necessity partly known as well as partly unknown. He has no patience for the half lights of finite knowledge, and the parables and sacraments of life which speak of better things than reason can fully grasp. Light or dark? is his only question. If he cannot see his way quite clear, he will ask for some one good work that he may do it and enter into life, or at any rate some precise law that shall relieve him from the burden of thought and the responsibility of action. If he finds that he cannot do everything for himself, he wants everything done for him. So he is apt to take for granted either that revelation must make everything perfectly clear to reason, or that it will be a detailed system of arbitrary commands which reason must not presume to discuss.

Our question is not only legitimate, but necessary. We cannot discuss the genuineness of an alleged revelation in any other way than by comparing it with a standard already in our minds. The general idea must always come before the particular. Such a standard is likely to be more or less vague and incomplete, and to "leave many things abrupt"; but we cannot move a step in the matter without a standard of some sort. Indeed, we cannot help having a standard, for we cannot seriously contemplate the possibility of revelation with-

out some belief in God's existence, and therefore some more or less definite ideas of his nature.

It may be said again from another point of view that our question is not scientific but purely speculative, and therefore unprofitable,—that the only legitimate method is to reason back from ascertained facts to find out whether a revelation has been given, and if so, of what sort it was, and to make no theories except for the temporary purpose of focussing our thoughts or suggesting lines of study. The answer is that we shall not be making imaginary models of a world. The one sound method is simply to reason on ascertained facts according to their nature, backward or forward as occasion may require; so that if we can find facts prior to revelation, we are perfectly free to reason forward from them—from what we know of God to what may be expected from him, from facts to their consequences, not from imaginations to castles in the air. We shall need to walk warily, but we are treading no forbidden ground. We shall fail as others have failed if we expect to see things in their full meaning *sub specie aeternitatis*. Yet the failures of the past may help us towards the genuinely scientific success of pushing the veil of mystery a little further back. In this sense we shall find our way by the carcases of them that have gone before.

I invite your attention to an answer attempted near two hundred years ago. It may be more successful in clearing the question than it was in solving the problem.

Matthew Tindal was a man of mark. He was born

during Cromwell's protectorate, and came up to Oxford with crude opinions of a High Church sort, so that he fell an easy prey to the "Roman emissaries" in James II's reign, though not for long. Early in 1688 he was convinced of "the absurdities of popery," and settled down in life as a free-thinking churchman, and a formidable opponent of the "independence of the Church upon the State" preached by the High-fliers of Queen Anne's time. In 1706 his *Rights of the Christian Church*, in defence of the Erastian constitution of England, drew forth more than twenty answers from the gladiators of the Church. Henceforth he was "Satan's darling son" to men like Francis Atterbury and his own old college tutor, the nonjuror Hickes. Tindal was an advocate of note in 1696, when John Toland raised the standard of Deism in his *Christianity not Mysterious*, and saw a whole generation of younger combatants pass away before he came forward himself, on the evening of life, to sum up on behalf of Deism the floating doubts of the eighteenth century in his *Christianity as old as the Creation*, published in 1730

The Deists are forgotten now, and even their conquerors are out of fashion. The literary person of our time is hardly equipped without a second-hand sneer at Butler. Yet those old-world questions were the crude beginnings of the great controversy on the possibility and meaning of revelation which seems gathering to its hottest battle in our generation; and Tindal was not unworthy of the place he held among its early leaders.

Like a true son of the eighteenth century, he begins

with God as a creator and moral governor outside the world, and man as knowing him by reason, and by reason only. God is good, and can have no motive but the good of his creatures, so that he cannot have refused them the revelation which was needed to give them happiness. This Natural Religion Tindal describes as "the belief in the existence of God, and the sense and practice of those duties which result from the knowledge we have by reason of him and his perfections, of ourselves and our imperfections, and of our relation to him and to his other creatures; so that Natural Religion takes in everything that is founded on the reason and nature of things." Like its author, it must be absolutely perfect, eternal, and unchangeable. It must be absolutely reasonable, for nothing but reasoning can improve reason, by which alone we know God. It must be perfectly clear and simple, else its purpose, which is the happiness of all men, would be defeated. It must be original and universal, for all men have equal need of it, and God wills all men to be saved. It must also be sufficient—not that all must have the same knowledge of it, but all must have sufficient knowledge. We cannot suppose that "after men had been for many ages in a miserable condition, God thought fit to amend the eternal, universal Law of Nature by adding certain observances to it, not founded on the reason of things; and that those, out of his partial goodness, he communicated only to some, leaving the greatest part in their former dark and deplorable state."

Hence generally, he concludes, Revealed Religion

cannot differ from Natural except in the mode of communication; else one or the other would be defective, and a reproach to its author. It cannot be more than a republication of Natural Religion; and anything further it may seem to contain, not being founded on nature and reason, cannot properly belong to it. Such additional matter must be either arbitrary (or positive) precepts, which imply that God changes his mind, or else unintelligible dogmas—mere "orthodox paradoxes" —like the Trinity, which really tell us nothing because they mean nothing. If men have gone astray from Natural Religion, they have mostly been led astray by the priests, and by the idea that God has pleasure in cruelty. So much worse is superstition than Atheism. Christianity therefore, if rightly understood, is as old as Creation. Christ came to preach, not new duties but repentance for breach of the old; or, in other words, to free men from the load of superstition which had been mixed up with religion. His concern, as he said, was only with the sinners; and his commands extend not beyond moral things, leaving all questions of mere means to human discretion. Scripture is at most a secondary rule of life, for it depends on and constantly appeals to Natural Religion, which indeed is our only means of knowing even that God is not deceiving us. Moreover, it is obscure, uncertain, and in its literal sense often downright immoral. Yet if we depart from the literal sense, we are not honestly taking it for our guide. Therefore from first to last we have nothing but Natural Religion to rely on.

This is Tindal's position, stated as near as may be

in his own words. We notice in the last clauses his appeal to the rooted superstition of the English, that the strict literal sense of a document is "the plain meaning" which no honest man will think of disputing. He is a thorough Puritan in this matter; and he is quite representative in his want of common sense, for even now by far the larger number of the popular (I do not mean the serious) objections to Christianity assume it as manifest that the Bible must stand or fall by its literal meaning. Yet a lawyer like Tindal might have remembered that even a clause of a will is not construed unconditionally in its literal sense without regard to the general meaning of the document and to other facts which may clear up the testator's intention.

Butler's is a work of wider scope, for he has various opponents in view; but so far as concerns Tindal, his main argument is purely critical. Far from fully stating his own beliefs, he consents to reason on opinions like the opinion of necessity, which he plainly tells us he does not believe, and leaves out doctrines of the utmost importance which he does believe, like the essential morality of acts. His main thesis as against Tindal is that parts of revelation not found in Natural Religion are not on that account to be rejected. He agrees that God is the creator and moral governor of the world, and that the purpose (not the scope) of Natural Religion is pretty much as Tindal states it; nor would he have cared to dispute its sufficiency for man—apart from sin. To sinless beings in some other world it may be that God is pure benevolence; but to us he is a moral governor. Tindal's enormous oversight has not

escaped him. "The generality of mankind are so far from having that awful sense of things, which the present state of vice and misery and darkness seems to make but reasonable, that they have scarce any apprehension or thought at all about this matter, any way; and some serious persons may have spoken unadvisedly concerning it. But . . . consider what it is for creatures, moral agents, presumptuously to introduce that confusion and misery into the kingdom of God, which mankind have in fact introduced; to blaspheme the Sovereign Lord of all; to contemn his authority; to be injurious to the degree they are to their fellow-creatures, the creatures of God." Natural Religion is not the simple and sufficient rule Tindal takes it for. Men generally cannot reason it out in its purity, and will not if they can; and in any case need a standing reminder of it. Moreover, "divine goodness, with which, if I mistake not, we make very free in our speculations, may not be a bare single disposition to produce happiness, . . . perhaps an infinitely perfect mind may be pleased with the moral piety of moral agents in and for itself, as well as upon account of its being essentially conducive to the happiness of his creation." Yet further, the present life seems to be an education for another, so that we cannot expect to have everything quite clear in it.

Accordingly, Christianity is not a simple republication of Natural Religion, but an authoritative republication of it in its genuine simplicity, confirmed by fresh evidence, embodied in a visible church, and secured by express commands to all Christians to preserve it and

transmit its benefits to future times. Besides this, it contains an account of "a dispensation of things not at all discoverable by reason, carrying on by the Son and the Spirit for the recovery and salvation of mankind," who are represented to be in a state of ruin. We find then certain additional doctrines revealed, and sundry duties enjoined in consequence of them. These doctrines present no difficulties but such as we find in Natural Religion, which is accepted notwithstanding; and they have the further confirmation of miracle and prophecy. The duties arise in part directly from the facts revealed —as if the Son of God is indeed our Saviour, Natural Religion itself will tell us that we owe certain duties to him. As for positive commands—those whose grounds we do not see—they are certainly inferior to the moral precepts which are written in our hearts; but they are not therefore unimportant, for the fact, if fact it be, that they are of divine appointment "lays us under an obligation to obey them—an obligation moral in the strictest and most proper sense."

Tindal was no mean controversialist, but he has fared ill in the stronger hands of Butler. It can hardly be denied that on the admitted premises and within the limits of Butler's purpose his argument is triumphant. Others may dispute the premises, but the Deist can make no reply. Though the doubts of later times have shifted far away from Deism, Butler's method is a lesson for all ages, his arguments have often lost nothing of their force, and many of his grave warnings might have been written for the hasty thinkers of our time.

Nevertheless, the teaching of history has carried us far beyond the arguments of 1736. In the light of science we see now that the world is not a machine made once for all by some great engineer's hand from outside, but an organism slowly developed by a power working from within. Even Tindal was not without some idea of progress in revelation, as where he tells us that a *special* law was given to the Jews, or that a prohibition of usury "would *now* be immoral." But these with him are only passing inconsistencies: to us they are commonplaces, for the idea of evolution dominates both history and religion. If it has destroyed some of the old teleological statements, it has restored them to us on a vaster scale, by forcing us to look for mind in the whole development, and to recognize in the physical world, and still more in the spiritual nature of man, no mere creatures of a divine will, but revelations of the divine nature. It has also taught us to abandon the barren idea of this life as *mere* probation, which meaner men gathered from Butler's words without noticing how carefully he explained it as education and training, and to see in this life's trials our preparation for some higher stage of development.

This glance back at the Deist Controversy and the changes the question has undergone in later times may suffice to indicate some of the conditions and some of the difficulties of the problem before us. When we essay it ourselves, we shall be free to use all the resources of science and criticism, and to take useful hints wherever we can find them. Thus the Muslim idea of revelation gathers it up in a book, the Christian in a

Person described as, he that liveth and was dead, and is alive for ever more. These are ideas we may find worth comparing with each other and with the best idea we can form in our own way; and we may find it useful to notice how far each system has in its historical career been true to its central thought.

Now I think we are free to begin our proper work.

In our discussion of the question what a revelation is likely to be, and what idea we can form beforehand of the lines it will take, we start from the fact already noticed, that there is no argument which stops short at the bare existence of God. As we have seen, every consideration which goes to verify our assumption that there is a God goes equally to show that he is a God of such or such a sort, and compels us to hold such or such definite beliefs about him. In fact, we cannot believe in the existence of anything whatever without some conception of its nature. We may call it the Unknowable, but we cannot believe that it exists unless we think we know something about it. The unknowable is the unthinkable.

The word God is one that ought not to be ambiguous. Theists[1] and Antitheists are generally agreed that it means a personal Being of infinite rightness and infinite goodness, wielding infinite wisdom and infinite power. The existence of such a Being the Theist affirms and the dogmatic Atheist denies, while the Pantheist refines away his personality, the Polytheist his attributes, and the

[1] I speak of Theists throughout in the broad sense which includes all believers in one personal God, not in the narrower sense which would exclude Deists and Christians.

Agnostic tells us that with our faculties it is futile to discuss the matter. The answers are various enough; but there is no ambiguity in the question, Is there such a Being, or is there not?

We have coupled together rightness and goodness as referring to the divine nature, wisdom and power to its outward action; and this appears to be what Theists usually mean, though their words often do injustice to their thought. Even the Muslim tells us that Allah is merciful and forgiving; and however he may magnify the attribute of naked power, he will in the end hardly refuse to admit that he presumes it to be the instrument of a will which must have some definite quality, even if it be inscrutable to men. The division is also natural because it corresponds to a difference in the mode of recognition, for though we shall see presently that man acts as a single person, not as a bundle of faculties, it is still roughly true to say that while wisdom and power are recognized by intellect and understanding, rightness and goodness are known by conscience and feeling. Moreover, wisdom and power refer more specially to God's work in the world, rightness and goodness to his dealings with men, so that the former correspond to the causal and teleological argument from the structure of the physical universe, the latter to the ontological and moral argument from the constitution of man.

It is argued by some that however great the wisdom and power that work in the physical universe, they may still be finite if the universe itself is finite. Perhaps they may, though we cannot be sure that an infinite power might not prefer the infinite elaboration of a

finite universe to the making of an infinite one; and such infinite elaboration is now more than ever suggested to us by the instability of the atom. At all events, the objection is not worth much, though it is Kant's objection. Our sidereal universe does appear to be finite, unless the rays of light are either absorbed in space—which so far as we know is most unlikely, or stopped by screens of nebulous matter—which may be possible. Dark stars are hardly worth considering, for they could not occult many bright stars without such prodigious excess of numbers (at least thousands to one) as would shew itself in other ways. With these reserves we certainly seem at some points to see clear through the system to the voids of space beyond, and can even form some idea of the centuries that light itself would take to reach the distant border

Where frontier suns fling out their useless light.

But then say some from the other side, If the sidereal universe is finite, it cannot be the whole universe. Perhaps it is not. Space may be fuller than we know. The boundless ether may not be the barren desert which it seems. The everlasting burnings of the giant stars may teem with life, though no such life as ours. There may, for aught we know, be greater galaxies than ours for ever sunk in gulfs of space compared with which the distance of the farthest star is but a span. It may be that all this and more than this will meet our eyes whenever the veil of mortal sense is lifted. But let us leave these imaginations, and be content to take the universe as we find it. Consider

first in its greatness the wisdom and power which orders the movements of stars and planets, then in its delicacy that which pencils the flowers and scatters the feathery crystals of the snow. Assuming *ex hypothesi* that it *is* wisdom and power, can we safely deny that such wisdom and power as this would be able to do anything whatever which can be done by infinite wisdom and power? Action and reaction are equal in mechanics; but while reaction measures the power put forth, the power put forth is not necessarily the whole power with personal agents as it is with physical forces. If we see a man throw a stone twenty yards, we do not straightway take for granted that he could not have thrown it thirty. So, if we assume that the power which has made myriads of stars could not have made myriads more, we take for granted that it is a physical force and not a personal agent. On the common conception of space and time as infinite we must allow that, if the universe is limited, the power behind it is self-limited, for the unity of things forbids us to suppose it limited by some necessity greater than itself. In that case we must set down to wisdom and power greater than any assignable wisdom and power the manifestation of indefinite wisdom and power that is made to us in the physical universe; and this surely is the definition of infinite wisdom and power in terms of quantity. If, on the other hand, space and time are ideal, infinity becomes a question of quality, and these considerations of quantity have nothing to do with the matter.

But the idea of right seems infinite even in ourselves. It is a higher and more godlike thing than power,

however great. It is not conditioned like physical things by space and time. That which under given circumstances is right here and now for us must also be right always and everywhere, and for every being who has a sense of right like ours. That sense has all the aspect of a power of a higher order, which only condescends to things of space and time when particular decisions have to be declared. In this independence of space and time rather than in barren extension over them lies the true conception of the infinite. No being of finite rightness could have given men in that idea the potency and promise of what would infinitely surpass himself. If the gods went their way and were satisfied, and the beasts went their way and were satisfied, the unrest of man can only mean that he is not rightly related to his present life. With the gods the ideal was supposed to be actual; with the beasts the actual is ideal, or easily may be: with man alone the two are parted elements which he is ever seeking to recombine. Hence the divine unrest which shews that here we have no continuing city, and drives us to seek for that which is to come—for civilized man has learned under Christian influences to put the timeless ideal in the future tense. Were man only a beast, he would go the way of the beasts and be satisfied: but being a beast, he is also something more than a beast; and that something whereby he differs from the beasts, belonging of necessity to a higher order, can be nothing else than some such an element of the divine as is theologically called the image of God.

We will not for the present pursue this further than

to indicate some important consequences. If it be granted that the beasts have no knowledge of things divine, man's knowledge must be given by this divine element in which he differs from them. If there be gods, they must be in relation to man—or indeed he could not even imagine their existence; and if there be one God, he must be the archetype of man, so that (*pace* Xenophanes and some of the moderns) anthropomorphic ideas may be sound, provided they idealize the best in man and not the worst. Thus, however God's rightness and goodness may excel ours in degree, it must be the same in kind. Infinite goodness must be of the same nature as our finite goodness if we are to recognize it as goodness at all, and the infinite Person who is above the imperfections of personality in us must stand in moral relations to ourselves, and therefore to all finite being that is or can be known to us.

The facts which concern us in our investigation cover the whole range of human knowledge, for every part of it is full of them. Let us look first at the physical universe. We see before us a system vast indeed beyond imagination, but, as we have reason to believe, not strictly infinite. And if it is not strictly infinite, the law of the radiation of heat would seem to shew that it is neither eternal in the past nor in anything like its present state eternal in the future. The discovery of radium shews indeed that the sun may have unsuspected sources of heat; but the fact remains, that any finite quantity of heat, however great, must be radiated into space within a finite time.

The system seems everywhere composed of much the

same chemical "elements," whatever may prove to be the real nature of such elements. The meteorites bring us from the depths of space no elements otherwise unknown to us, though sometimes they come in combinations not found on the surface of the earth. The spectrum of Arcturus differs little from that of the sun; and though other stars differ more, and the proportions of the elements may vary from star to star, and even from planet to planet, still the list of those we find is pretty much the same throughout. Moreover, the properties of matter seem always and everywhere the same. The raindrops and the sand-ripples of Palæozoic times are just like those of yesterday; and even in the furthest stars the phenomena of light and gravitation, so far as we can trace them, are exactly the same as here. We find no exception. The hemlock did not refuse to poison Socrates, or the cross to do its work on Jesus of Nazareth. Wherever we have found certain things following such and such conditions, we have so constantly found them following again what seem to be the same conditions, that we assume—what we cannot demonstrate—that they always will follow. We assume, for instance, that the sun which rose to-day will rise to-morrow, and that as A performed a chemical experiment yesterday, so B will be able to do it to-day.

Such an assumption—such a creation of faith—is called a law of nature. But here we must note the meaning of our words. Nature in this connexion is the universe of physical phenomena in their sequence, but without regard to causes not physical. Thus it includes all physical phenomena in any way connected with will,

but not the will itself. In a wider sense all personal action, or more generally all that exists, belongs to nature and is natural. We shall find the importance of this presently; but meanwhile we shall find it convenient to retain what seems now the prevailing use of the word, defining nature so as to make it co-extensive with science, which deals with sequences only, and reserving all beyond for philosophy, which deals with causes also. Thus nature will not be the sum of things, except for one who maintains that phenomena have no true causes at all.

The word *law* needs attention too, for a law of nature is not like a law divine or human, "a general command issued by a superior, and enforced by a sanction." It is not even "a rule of action," unless we go outside science to assume some person acting. If such a law be also a divine law, the man of science as such has nothing to do with the fact: and if he chooses to discuss the question, his scientific knowledge gives him no right to pronounce on it as an expert. When he speaks of law he means only that, so far as our experience goes, a phenomenon **b** has always followed a phenomenon **a**, and *therefore* always will follow it. Put more shortly, though not quite accurately, the same "causes" will always have the same effects. This principle of the uniformity of natural law is taken, and rightly taken, as one of the fundamental postulates of science. Its general truth is, of course, beyond dispute; but as regards its meaning, there are some things to notice.

In the first place, it is matter of faith, not matter of

knowledge, that **b** will follow; for the fact is of the future, and the future cannot be *known* before it comes to pass. However strongly and well grounded our belief, say that the sun will rise to-morrow, still it is only a belief. It is not knowledge, as we have knowledge that the sun rose to-day. In fact, the conclusion, Therefore **b** will follow, is utterly illogical, for we have no right to draw it on an induction limited to past experience, and therefore confessedly incomplete. We shall be stating a fact of our own experience if, instead of therefore **b** will follow, we say therefore we believe that **b** will follow; but now the phantom of logical reasoning is gone. The fact that **b** has followed a thousand times before is not logical proof that it will follow again; only, we believe it will. If M is a duke, this is not logical proof that he will not pick my pocket; only, I believe he will not. And if we answer that while it is physically possible for a duke to be a pickpocket, it is not physically possible for anything but **b** to follow **a**, we are begging the question. We may say that **b** has followed before, or that we believe it will follow again; but if we say that it must follow, we say what needs to be proved, and has never yet been proved. Our belief on incomplete inductions, that what has followed before will follow again, is not a conclusion from reasoning, but an instinct born with us, as much infantile as scientific. If experience confirms it, experience does not originate it.[1]

[1] It is to be noted here that "scientific" verification is only one form of proof that a thing has come to pass. Ordinary testimony may be equally conclusive. It would not be unscientific to say, The experience has not

The next thing to notice is that it is not quite accurate to say that **a** is followed by **b**, for it is supposed that parts of the phenomenon **a** have no influence, and might be different. Thus it does not matter whether A or B performs the experiment, provided they do the same things. But the fact that A performed it and not B is a part of the phenomenon **a**; and if it is rightly set aside along with many other things as irrelevant, the fact remains that the scientific "cause" is not the whole phenomenon **a**, but a selection from it supposed to contain all the facts which influence the scientific effect. Similarly the scientific effect is not the whole phenomenon **b**, but a selection from it supposed to contain all the facts influenced by the scientific "cause." In both cases, then, everything depends on the inclusion of all the relevant facts in the selection made. And though the risk of error may commonly be very small, we cannot safely take for granted that it may always be neglected. There is a question of selection here, and even scientific selection is not infallible.

But if the facts are rightly selected, there is room even then for mistake. There is always the possibility that a phenomenon $\mathbf{a}_1$, which we have not fully distinguished from **a**, will be followed by something different —as in fact happens at every discovery. And again, we may miss the distinction of $\mathbf{a}_1$ from **a** by failing to notice the difference of an effect $\mathbf{b}_1$ from the **b** we expected. In that case we have missed a discovery which remains open for our successors.

been repeated, and perhaps cannot now be repeated; but A is a good witness, and there is no reason to doubt his report of it.

It must also be noted that though the uniformity of natural law is a sufficient postulate for science, which deals only with sequences, it is not sufficient for philosophy, which deals also with causes. In special studies we assume the results of other studies. Thus the geologist assumes the results of the chemist, and the historian those of the geographer, so far as he requires them. But philosophy, which deals with the sum total of things, has no right to take a postulate as final when we can get behind it. Now it is agreed on all hands—even the Atheist will hardly deny it—that there is a power of some sort behind the uniformity observed in nature. This uniformity must be the outcome of such power, so that the final postulate must be that this power is of a sort which justifies our assumption that Nature is uniform. It is not enough to say that such power works uniformly, for this merely repeats the first assumption, and makes no link with the future. The only sufficient postulate is that such power is perfectly good and perfectly trustworthy. On no other can we be reasonably sure that natural law is uniform, much less that evolution will be upward, or even that the universe will not vanish into chaos to-morrow morning.

Now, if the uniformity of natural law is not a final assumption, but depends on another assumption behind it, we have no right to take it as finally true till we have examined it in the light of our truly final postulate. For aught we see yet, it may prove to be a close approximation, but not rigidly accurate. The fact that we have never seen it broken does not prove that it never has been broken, still less that it never will

be broken. Though uniformity is evidently the rule, we must know something of the power behind nature before we can safely say for certain that there can be no exception to the rule. Moreover, trustworthiness implies personality, and a moral relation to ourselves; and though it may issue in uniform action, it is not bound to uniform action in the same way as physical forces are bound.

"Natural laws" are nothing more than observed successions of phenomena; and if they are never broken, the reason is not that no power in the universe is able to break them—for this is more than we know, but that if they were broken we should cease to call them laws. The idea of cause (as distinct from sequence), or of constraining force in natural laws, is as foreign to science as that of moral value in them. What we mean by saying that the physical universe is governed by general laws is that knowledge is impossible unless the whole system is at least a rational unity, whatever else it be. And this means that if Force be its moving power, there must be one Force and no more; and if God, there must be one God and no more.

LECTURE III.

REVELATION IN NATURE.

But is it Force or God? Is it a blind unconscious power working mechanically, or is it a living Person who can make his choice of ends and means? Our assumption of trustworthiness implies the latter; but we will ask again. If the heavens declared the glory of God to them of old, one would think they must speak in thunder to men like us, who look down vistas of space and time our fathers never dreamed of. The common things on which the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind—the sea and the morning, the wild goats of the rock, the horse that mocketh at fear and the eagle that beholdeth from afar—all these are no more than the surface of a mighty structure of seeming power and wisdom which grows more marvellous with every year's discoveries. The old legends pale before the transformations of the aphis or the Salpa, and the wizardry of Michael Scott is as nothing beside the marvels of the spectroscope. And there is also beauty running through Nature, from the purple clouds of evening to the iridescent colours that flash like jewels from a beetle's wing case. The petals of a lily are more gorgeous than the robes of Solomon; and even the

tiger's beauty is not more terrible than a spider's eyes, gleaming out like four gigantic pearls.

At first sight all this would seem to confirm hundreds of times over the old belief in a God whose handiwork is earth and heaven. But science appears to shew that if there be such a God, he works throughout by natural laws. We do not find him creating new species, but evolving them from the old—and evolution is "(1) a continuous progressive change; (2) according to certain laws, of differentiation and others; (3) by means of resident forces." This is Le Conte's definition,[1] from the standpoint of a practical man of science; and we accept it subject to certain cautions. *Continuous* is not necessarily opposed to anything but catastrophic change. It does not imply either that the variations are indefinite or that the apparent changes in one generation are always very small. *Progress* is general progress of the whole, not excluding regress or degeneration in any number of species or individuals. *Resident* forces do not exclude the action of forces outside the organism. Some take it that indefinite and insensible variation is the meaning of the word: our notice is simply that our use of it must not be construed as admitting this.

Before we go further, it may be urged with some force that the idea of progress assumes a directive power guiding the process, for it is not implied in the mere survival of the organisms best fitted each to its own conditions. Such directive power may work either in the conditions or in the organisms, or in both; but in one or the other it must work, if there is to be any progress.

[1] Le Conte, *Evolution*.

But if we find evolution everywhere and creation nowhere, some will ask whether evolution may not suffice without creation. Need we assume a God if we never find him acting? If he will neither do good nor do evil, how is he better than the idols in Isaiah? Darwin asked for a few simple germs of life to begin with, and undertook from these to derive the whole complex of life around us. Well, a man who begins with an egg is not unlikely to finish with the bird that was in it. But some of Darwin's successors announce that they can do without the egg. Given matter and force, they undertake to explain the universe as a purely natural evolution which neither needs nor admits any divine action whatever. Can they do it?

The first thing to notice is that evolution only denotes a method of action, and tells us nothing of the power that acts, except that it acts in this way and not in that. Being a scientific theory, it deals only with the succession of events, and never reaches any true cause at all. We are all agreed that there must be something to determine the succession; but if we ask whether that something is Force or God, science has nothing to say. Evolution leaves that question exactly where it was before; so that if the theory of design was not already overthrown by Kant, neither is it now subverted by Darwin.

But let us make sure of our ground before we go further. If any have argued from design, not simply to an artificer, but directly to a creator, they have argued hastily. The theory of evolution and the theory of design, when both are rightly limited, cover exactly the same ground. They both leave out the questions of

origin, and deal with processes of development; but while design is a theory of the guiding power, evolution is a theory of its method of action. The one theory is that design is the guiding power, whatever be its method of action; according to the other, evolution is the method of action, whatever be the guiding power. They are quite independent. If design is to be contradicted, we must make necessity the guiding power; if evolution, we must show that the action is discontinuous.

Thus the theory of design is not that design originated the system, but simply that design is working it now. The question of origin lies further back, but only one step further back. On one side we can all agree that if design is not working the system now, we have no evidence that it ever did work it. On the other, if design is working it now, there seems no escape from the conclusion that design originated it. No doubt design in ourselves works on matter it did not originate; but when we come to the entire system, we must choose between a creator and necessity. A mere artificer like ourselves is unthinkable, for in that case the system, and therefore the artificer who shapes it, must be necessary and eternal. But then we get two first principles for a universe which is one. Either, then, this artificer resolves into a necessary system and forms a part of it, or else we must further admit that he is its creator. The dilemma of design or no-design is absolute, and there is no escape from it by taking a blind instinct for the guiding power. If there is no design in that instinct, we come back to necessity; if there is, it must reside in a being higher than the animal which acts. In any case it is clear that accord-

ing as design or necessity is working the system now. design or necessity must have originated it—if the latter can be called an origin at all.

The theory of evolution in its nineteenth-century form was suggested to its twin founders, Darwin and Wallace, by the phenomena of biology, and is now generally accepted as at any rate a general account of the way in which living things have come into their present forms. From biology it was extended to history, in spite of the difference made by the free action of men. Some would get rid of the difference by making freedom illusory, so that in the end we have nothing but blind forces as before. However, we need not trouble ourselves about this quite yet. We may frankly accept evolution, not as a cause, nor as a final theory, but as a theory which gives a general though largely metaphorical account of the processes by which organisms have come into their present form. By calling it a general account, we mean that though it describes a large number of such processes, we cannot assume that it describes all, or even that it completely describes any of them. And in calling it largely metaphorical, we mean that if the development of physical organisms be strictly and properly called an evolution, that of social organisms can only be so called by a metaphor—that though there is likeness enough between the two processes to justify our use of the word, we must not allow such use to conceal important differences. Our scientific friends often caution us not to let metaphors run away with us, and we thankfully accept their warning.

Leaving questions of origin in abeyance for the

moment, we cannot allow that evolution fully describes the method even of biological development. Supposing it completely to explain the useful side of things by natural selection and suchlike means—though even this is more than can be said for certain—it breaks down on their æsthetic side. Its failure here is as conspicuous as its success before.

Sexual selection and guiding lines will not go far. They explain few cases, and these but roughly and in part: yet beauty seems as widespread in the world as use; and when once the two are fairly separated the theory is helpless. In the mineral world, at any rate, there can be no thought of use to explain the beauty, say of the colours revealed by polarized light. Yet separated they must be, for even if beauty has occasional uses, it is essentially the relation of forms, colours, and sounds to a sense which seems independent of utility. So at least it seems at present, though the matter will have to be reconsidered whenever it can be shewn that beauty commonly serves a purely useful end. It would be a new light if such ends were found for the *delicate* stipplings of a flower, the grace of a bird's flight, or the splendour of a sunset.

Then again, in what sense has the development been continuous? Supposing the visible outcome continuous, though even this is not always the fact,[1] is it certain that there never was any change in the underlying forces? Is it certain that no new force ever came in under cover of the "chance variations," acting at first insensibly, and afterwards more strongly, seeming first

[1] *E.g.* the case of the Ancon sheep.

no more than a difference of degree, and only later shewing itself a difference of kind? The possibility involves no visible breach of continuity; so that, though the question is purely scientific, science may never be able to decide it. Perhaps, on the contrary, the germ of the very highest was in the very lowest, so that one unbroken sweep of development covers all, and everything but personal action comes by necessary sequence from the original arrangement. Some of the old "breaks," like that between animal and vegetable life, are perhaps fairly bridged over; and if that which separates man from the anthropoids is more doubtful, it is not because the body presents any difficulty, but because his mental and spiritual characters are so unlike all other products of evolution. In any case, even if we assume matter to be eternal, there seem to be "breaks" at the appearance of life and of conscience. Now, if Force is the guiding power, any apparent breaks must be illusory; but if there be an evolving mind, the question must be left open. In that case there may or may not have been some visible discontinuity, though the evidence is still very strong that there is a real break between matter and life. It matters little for our purpose. Religion rests not on any particular order or method of past development, but on the fact of present experience, that life invests matter, and conscience life, with qualities of a different order from the old. The absence of a break is no disproof of creative action, and its presence is not more suggestive of design to a careful thinker than the continuous development. For the theory of evolution the difference may be im-

portant; for that of design it does not matter. Break or no break, the guiding power must be either design throughout or necessity throughout. The one thing impossible is to divide it between the two.

We need no long discussion of the so-called chance variations by which evolution is said to be carried on. The phrase may pass, but only as a confession of ignorance, not as an antitheistic assumption. Chance means obscure causes, not no causes at all. Given the throw, the toss of a halfpenny might be calculated as accurately as the fall of a stone, if our analysis was equal to the task. All that is known of the obscure causes tends to shew that their action is as determinate as that of better known causes. The variations are not always even small. What is more, they seem to tend in definite directions, not indiscriminately in all directions. This means that the directions of variation are limited in number, so we cannot assume that one variation or another will fall in a given direction, unless there be some directive power to guide it that way. It is poetry, not science, which tells us that "Chance governs all"; and that was only in Chaos. In any case, the fundamental postulate of science, that the physical universe is an ordered whole and not a chaos, must put such limits on "chance variations" as will justify us in believing that the unknown part of it cannot be very different from the known. If, for example, the known part points to a God, the unknown cannot point to that which the fool hath said in his heart. We may judge by the known as a fair sample of the whole, without fear that our main conclusions from it will ever

be reversed by further knowledge of what is now unknown.

Before we go further with the subject of design, let us once more clear the question. The appearance of design in the world is undisputed. The man who tells us that many things do not present that appearance cannot seriously deny that many do. Nor can it well be doubted in the face of history that the *primâ facie* inference is from the appearance of design to its reality. The Non-Theist will generally go so far with us; but then he joins issue. The *primâ facie* inference, he tells us, may have been very natural in the dark ages; but now that the light of science has arisen on the world, we can explain the appearance of design more reasonably by blind necessity than by the reality of design. This is the question before us. We are not asking now just whether the appearance of design is enough of itself to demonstrate the existence of an infinite Creator. Our question is simply whether we can infer the reality of design from the admitted appearance of design.

What suggests to us the idea of design is not the bare fact that things are suitable to ends; for if they have properties there must be ends to which they are suitable, so that such suitability is no more than the outcome of those properties. A falling tree is very suitable for killing a man; but though we occasionally hear of trees falling when men are passing, the event does not suggest design to us, — at least not till we have in some other way reached a high conception of providence. A pistol shot is equally suitable for killing

the man; and it suggests design, because we do not hear of pistols procured and loaded and pointed and fired without design—not perhaps to kill that man or any other man, but at all events design to make them capable of killing somebody. And all these four acts are themselves trains of sequences of the sort which suggests design, so that even if the pistol were pointed and fired by accident we could not rule out the idea of design unless we had reason to suppose that the procuring and the loading also were accidental. So other cases. What suggests design in the tiger is not the simple fact that his teeth are suitable for eating flesh, but the co-ordination of teeth and claws and stomach and habits generally to a flesh diet. Other cases are even more suggestive of design, because they are more complicated and cover a wider field. Thus in the response of the eye to light, or in the adaptation of the sexes to each other, in the growth of unborn offspring and the provision made for it, we sum up far-reaching trains of independent causes whose co-ordination is not easy to account for without the help of some directive power.

True, design is only a theory, and therefore cannot be demonstrated; but neither can the rival theory of necessity. Be the case for either what it may, it can always be disputed by the man who takes no proof but logical demonstration. So far the two theories are precisely on a level, and there is nothing to decide between them but the better or worse account we find they give of the facts. Now the evidence of design is cumulative. It is a fallacy to say that "the vastest

range of design is of no greater validity than one attested instance of it, so far as proof is concerned," for the chief attestation of one instance lies precisely in the range and variety of other instances. Each successive case which suggests design makes it more credible that the next is also a case of design. But the evidence for necessity is not cumulative. If one class of cases can be explained without recourse to design, no presumption arises that a different class can be so explained. Design covers all the cases with a single theory; necessity has to be fitted afresh (like the Ptolemaic epicycles) to each class of cases. It is like a parcel of boys all making different and inconsistent excuses for the simple fact that they were found in the wrong place.

The theory of design in its older form rested chiefly on sundry special adaptations supposed to be separately planned. But now that these can be explained—at least immediately—as the necessary results of natural "laws" which cannot be supposed to design anything at all, design is so far excluded. But we still have the "laws" themselves to deal with: and these are much greater and more complicated matters than the isolated adaptations, for they involve the whole structure and history of the universe in all its parts, both small and great, in the whole range of space from one end of the sidereal system to the other, and in the whole expanse of time from the dim beginnings of the present order of things to the final equilibrium of heat in which light and life—such life as ours is now—may be doomed to perish. We see no longer a multitude of separate adaptations accounted for by separate acts of design,

but one vast organic whole evolving like a thing of life, and seeming to need no less than eternal power and divinity to plot out the evolution, to work the "laws" that cannot work themselves, and to dovetail all the parts in their infinite complexity into one consistent whole. The question of design is only thrown back from the particular adaptations to the general "laws." By what general laws came it, for instance, in the dawn of time, before this earth of ours was earth at all, that the streams of star-dust rushing through space heaped up the different chemical elements in the quantities and also in the proportions needful to sustain such life as since has lived on earth? A little more or less of carbon dioxide would plainly be a difference of life and death to animals or plants; and bromides instead of chlorides would have made the ocean like the Dead Sea. Or look again at the majestic development of life itself, from its lowly beginnings on the waves of the warm Archæan sea, slowly working upward from tiny sponges and radiolarians to the tree-like ferns of the coal measures and the colossal beasts of later ages; till at last in the fulness of time the world-wide evolution converges from all quarters on the coming of its lord and ruler, man. All this may be the work of blind forces; but is there nothing to guide them? Is there no intending will revealed, no increasing purpose running through the ages? In a word, can there be such evolution without an evolving mind? Is any other theory even decently plausible?

No doubt what has been and still is the general answer of thinking men: and though an ancient and

imposing tradition may be mistaken, it ought not to be renounced without serious reason. Now, what is there to set against it? We are all agreed that there is no true causation in natural "law": so that if we are shut up to this we have nothing but an endless series of phenomena, and never reach a true originating cause at all. But we do not get rid of the problem by stopping here. Matter causes nothing at all; force causes nothing but motion, and cannot determine its own direction. Therefore whatever problem of originating and directing power arises from the present arrangement of things arises equally from their arrangement in the furthest past we can discern.

One true originating and directing cause, and only one, is known to us in will. Our own will we know by direct experience, and other wills we infer from outward actions. Some would reduce even this to a mechanical resultant of motives, meaning by motives the things, whatever they be, which stir the will to deliberate action. But deliberate choice as opposed to unreasoning impulse implies a pause for deliberation; and we know as certainly as we know any scientific fact that in deliberation we contribute from ourselves an irreducible element which prevents the issue from being anything like a mechanical resultant of those motives. We are not rigid bodies moved in space according to dynamical formulæ, but living beings who can kick at the so-called forces which seem to drive us, and are very much in the habit of doing so, for it is only metaphorically that motives can be likened to mechanical forces. Nor need the decisive element therefore be caprice; for though we

are conscious of power to do anything whatever within certain limits, a man in his right mind has some principle or general aim, good or bad, to which he endeavours to subject that power, so that a choice of motives in particular cases resolves itself into a choice of means for carrying out such principle or general aim.[1] Such a man, for instance, does not love money for its own sake, but as a general means of getting what he wants, or pleasure for its own sake, but as a means of realizing the life he most desires. The desire must be in us before we can even consider how it may be satisfied. So we choose our plans, not according to some "strength" ascribed to motives by a misleading metaphor, but simply as we deem this or that course of action best suited to our ultimate purpose.

The reality of freedom has been shortly put from another point of view. There is such a thing as truth, for otherwise the supposition that there is no truth would itself be false; there is such a thing as untruth, for otherwise contradictory beliefs would be true; and the world is a rational system, for otherwise all thought would be empty. Now necessity reduces every belief to a necessary effect of past states of mind which have nothing to do with truth and untruth. No means is left for distinguishing them, and reason and science disappear in idle speculation.

Yet again, if necessity were a fact it could not be a final fact. As freedom implies an agent acting freely, so necessity implies an agent acting necessarily. If it does not, no rational meaning seems possible for the

[1] Hyslop, *Elements of Ethics*, ch. iv.

word, and it is no better than a hocus-pocus. Then there must be a fact of some sort to decide that the action shall be necessary and not free; and this fact remains for investigation. If that fact be necessity again, the infinite regress opens out before us; and unless the chain is somewhere broken by a free agent, we cannot have a true cause at all. The necessitarian neither solves the problem nor frankly gives it up—and science with it, but puts forward a solution which turns all thought (including itself) into meaningless fancy.

Like scientific "laws," the inference of design is an induction based on incomplete knowledge of facts; and the only reasonable question is how far the theory describes facts. Now, as we saw just now, we do not attach the idea to all facts without distinction, but only to certain facts. Beyond the suitableness of things to ends, there is the further problem of the co-ordination of independent causes to a common end; and no question of design arises till we come to this. To these facts, and only to these, we attach the idea of design; and we attach it by the same necessity of thought which compels us to believe that there is design in similar facts originated by ourselves. Or by others, for wherever we see such co-ordination which is not caused by our own will, we never hesitate to refer it to some other will. No matter if the means employed are themselves subordinate ends, or if the main end is obscure, or if we cannot trace the co-ordination through all parts of the apparent scheme. We are often convinced that a man is working out a design, even when

we cannot guess what it is; and evidence of design in some parts of a whole is no way invalidated by failure to trace it in others.

Where the co-ordination seems to be the work of other men, the inference of design is so forced on us that no man in his right mind will deny it. If A goes to B's office every day at a certain hour, I conclude at once that he goes there for a purpose. I may have no idea what that purpose is, or why C goes with him; but I do not therefore doubt that he has a purpose, and I should be thought insane if I did. Now, if the co-ordination, as in the cases we had before, seems to be the work of some higher power, the inference of design is equally forced on us; and it holds the field till proof is given that facts are inconsistent with it, or at least that some other theory gives upon the whole as good a description of the facts, particularly including the illusion —for illusion it will have to be—that the co-ordination of means to ends implies design.

Notable differences may be pointed out between the works of Nature and the works of man; and some have taken occasion from these to deny the likeness between them. Thus Nature works inside her productions, and forms them by growth; whereas man works from the outside, and by adding one part to another. Nature also makes her living product reproduce itself, while man must himself make a new machine. These and others are important differences, though they are too broadly stated. But we should beg the question if we contrasted Nature's action as unconscious with man's as deliberate. The blind properties of things play

exactly the same part in both cases: whether design underlies them both is just the question at issue.

But important as the real differences are, they seem in no way to invalidate such evidence of design as there may be. The point of comparison is the fact that means are—no matter how—co-ordinated to ends in the works of Nature as well as in those of man. The inference of design rests on the fact, not on any particular circumstances of it, so that it remains unshaken till either the fact is denied or proof is given that the idea of design arises from particular circumstances found only in the works of man. As the fact of co-ordination is undisputed, we have only to ask on what grounds we are forbidden to carry over the idea of design from the works of man to the works of Nature.

There is nothing in the conception of design to limit it to finite beings. Doubtless design on God's part must differ from design of ours, but it is still design. Infinite wisdom which sees all the conditions of the problem may work very differently from the finite wisdom which has to pick its way from step to step. It may move to its end with unfailing certainty, but it will choose an end and co-ordinate means to ends as finite wisdom does. The alternative is that a perfect Being either cannot design anything at all, or cannot work out a design by law—which seems a strange idea of perfection.

The boldest attack on our argument is to say that there is no true analogy except in another world evolving like our own. We cannot grant this, for as between design and necessity there is no reason to suppose that another world would give us better evidence than our

own. If analogy is a likeness of relations, not of things, it would rather seem that no amount of unlikeness between things can disprove an alleged analogy, unless it covers the particular point of comparison. Irrelevant differences, however great, must go for nothing. If a ship sails, we cannot deny that a bird "sails," unless we dispute the likeness of the motion. The great difference that the bird is living and the ship is not goes for nothing, because it does not touch the likeness asserted.

We have already touched on the objection that we cannot argue from finite facts to an infinite designer; but here we may add that in any case infinity is irrelevant to the theory of design. Man works by laws that are fixed for him, which he cannot alter; but if God works, he works by laws he has fixed for himself, which he will not alter. The comparison is not between finite and infinite, but between one conditioned group of works and another. Our theory simply argues from co-ordination to design; whether the designer be infinite has nothing to do with the question. The only difference it makes is that he is limited by his own will, and not by something else.

Another objection seems even more faulty—that we may argue from design to an artificer who alters the form of matter, but not to a creator who originates its substance. Here it seems forgotten, first that this concedes the artificer's design, then that the theory of design is concerned with the working of the system, not with its origin. It is suggested by facts; and there can be no facts till a system is working. Again, though our

argument stops at an artificer, there is a step gained from which, as we have already seen, we are compelled to go on to a creator. But this is a distinct line of reasoning, for we shall be no longer arguing from co-ordination to design, but from the existence of an artificer to the unthinkableness of a mere artificer as the highest power that has to do with matter. Besides this, matter and form can only be separated in thought; in logical analysis, but not in fact. It was a crude philosophy which gave us in transubstantiation matter without form, and form without matter; and it is a crude philosophy which still sometimes speaks of Being without attributes, Mind without thought, or Will without object.

We are reminded again that unconscious co-ordination is not design. True, there may be design, and there may be unconsciousness of it; but not in the same agent. Unconscious design is a contradiction in terms. If an agent designs a thing, he must design it consciously; and if he acts unconsciously, his relation to it is precisely that of a stick or a stone which somebody else is using. The phrase is misleading, for it introduces the word design when it means only blind forces bringing out the same results as might be brought out by a person consciously designing. The admission of design is only verbal. Our argument that co-ordination implies design *somewhere* is no way weakened by proof that the immediate agent acts unconsciously. If we may look beyond an automaton to the design of a man who made it, what hinders us from looking beyond Nature to the design of One who is greater than Nature?

Neither again does it seem true that we can see man's design, but not Nature's, though it is very credible that we never see the whole of Nature's design. Assuming *ex hypothesi* that Nature co-ordinates means to ends as well as men, we get two parallel series of similar facts; and if we can see what the design is in one, why cannot we in the other? If, however, all that is meant is that while we see the whole of man's design we do not see the whole of Nature's, our answer might be to question whether we ever do see the whole even of man's design. If we do not, the two cases are exactly on a footing. In any case, however, there is no reason why imperfect knowledge should not be true as far as it goes. Evidence that Nature designed this or that end is no way weakened by the certainty that Nature designed also many other ends. The real bearing of the fact is not that we have no right to infer design anywhere, but that we cannot expect to see it everywhere. The design of a system still evolving cannot be more than incompletely known to us; and we have no right to require that every part of an uncompleted work should show its relevance to the incompletely known design of the whole. Every workman knows what fools we make of ourselves if we find fault with the details of machinery before we quite know what it is meant to do.

A strange idea which underlies a good deal of common thought is that design is a quasi-physical cause which ought to appear somewhere or other as a heterogeneous link breaking the chain of purely physical sequences. But this, we are told, is just what we never find in the operations of Nature. The links are always purely

physical, the sequences always unbroken; and we have no reason to suppose that if we could only trace them back far enough a link of another sort would tie them all up to the foot of Jupiter's chair. There is no room for design.

This is excellent logic: but it premises a false conception of design. It proves too much. In our own operations, where design is unquestioned, we have a precisely similar chain of purely physical causes. There is no single force we can put forth with design which purely physical causes cannot put forth without design, though always under limitations which nothing but design can remove. But if the items can be explained without design, it does not follow that the whole can be so explained. Given stones, physical causes might make a heap of them; and no question of design arises till we notice that the heap is on the top of a hill. Given words, they must come in some order or other; but if that order makes sense we infer design, and sometimes even if it does not. So with the operations of Nature. The physical causes form an unbroken series not including design, and there is really nothing to suggest design till we ask how they came to be arranged and co-ordinated to ends; and that is a question on which a science of sequences can have nothing to say. If then we set the question aside, or forbid it as Comte forbade it, we can do very well without design; but then we must give up all pretence of seriously facing facts. Design is not a link in the chain of sequences, but a directive power called in to account for their co-ordination to ends; and if we cannot explain the cairn of

stones without design, neither can we explain without design any natural product which seems to arise in a similar way from the co-ordination of means to an end.

Upon the whole, I can find but two serious or at least plausible objections; and these do not really touch the inference from the appearance of design to the reality of design of some sort. The gist of them both is that even if design were proved it would be the wrong sort of design. One of them begins by saying that the design indicated (supposing any design indicated) is that of a finite agent who finds difficulties in his way, and does not always take the best means of overcoming them, and this points to a God of limited wisdom or limited power, —to polytheism perhaps or a dualism of good and evil, or may be to a capricious God or a mere artificer, but not to the one all-sovereign and unchanging God of Theism. In a true creator's hands matter must be more plastic than the potter's clay, for it has no properties but those he has himself given it. Why then should he struggle with difficulties which must be of his own making, unless it be to display his skill in overcoming them? Why should he so often use indirect or clumsy means? Why indeed should he use any means at all, to work out what he must be able to do with a word? If Theism be true, we must go back to the worthier conception of the Psalmist—

> He spake, and it was done:
> He commanded, and it stood fast.[1]

To a certain distance the reply is easy. A divine knowledge may be needed for a full answer; but a divine

[1] Ps. xxxiii. 9.

knowledge is equally needed to justify the objection at all. Unless we know all the ends in view, the objection falls to the ground at once; and this is a large assumption. Perhaps the immediate end is clear, and even the final end may be visible; but if we cannot be sure that we know all the intermediate and subsidiary ends, our ignorance invalidates all criticism of the means employed. We are more or less competent judges (and there is no irreverence in judging) whether there is design, whether such and such is the immediate end, and whether this or that is a good means of reaching it; but we cannot judge of adaptation to unknown further ends. In our own experience we often find that a short cut to an end is a long way round to something further. Meanwhile it might be well if we were sometimes more modest in judging even of the immediate end. The imperfections of our senses, for example, are fair evidence that there was no design to give us more perfect senses; but they are not evidence that there was no design to give us our present senses. The fact of design is one thing, the limit of the design quite another; unless it be maintained that a limited end cannot under any circumstances be designed by such a God as Theism supposes; or, in other words, that he cannot create finite things. Perhaps, indeed, it is as well for us that our eyes are neither telescopes nor microscopes, and that our ears are not long enough to hear everything our friends may say of us.

It must be further considered that design implies choice, that choice implies limitation to one line of action out of sundry, and that the limitation is not removed if the choice is determined by infinite wisdom.

If things created are finite, they must have definite properties and relations; and if these are laid down by infinite wisdom, then infinite power (not being unwisdom) will be as effectually limited by them as if it were physically unable to get beyond them. If an infinite Being is pleased to work out a design, he must work it out subject to the properties he has given to things, so that he may have to use other and more cumbrous means than he would if things had such other properties as he would have given them if his one purpose had been to reach by the shortest way the one end we ourselves happen to be thinking of.

One perhaps of these further ends is not beyond our comprehension. Let us take a hint from the satirical suggestion that circuitous means can only be used "to display his skill in overcoming difficulties." Is that quite true? Supposing difficulties overcome, is it certain that nothing but skill would be shown? Some say that he is a God of patience (*μακροθυμία*) working by method, and preferring circuitous means to the short cut of breaking down the perverse will of man. Now, if the world is a revelation, as on any theistic theory it must be, such a character ought to shew itself. And how could it shew itself if he were bound always to make straight for the immediate object?

This may suffice to show that the objection rests on assumptions we have no right to make; though its rashness might be further shewn by other considerations. For instance, have we not reason to believe that the separation of means and ends which is a necessity of thought for us can have no place in an

infinite mind? However, if science is right in pointing to man as the goal of evolution, and if certain religions are right in teaching — what science, not being omniscience, is not competent to deny — that the natural order exists for and is subordinate to a spiritual order, we get a view which, if not free from difficulties, is at any rate rational and moral, and perhaps involves fewer difficulties than any other.

The greatest of these difficulties is the remaining objection. It is said that if there is design at all, the whole must be designed. We cannot pick and choose. Evil in the world and sin in ourselves—evil physical and evil moral—must be as much designed as any of the beneficent adaptations preached by Theism. Yet if God creates good and bad indiscriminately, the whole case for design disappears. His action is exactly that of some blind necessity, so that any theory of design is superfluous.

To this we might demur, that co-ordination of means to ends is still evidence for the existence of design, and that evidence for the existence of design is not refuted by evidence that the design is in some parts good and in others bad. If this were the case, we might fairly conclude that the design was not purely good, or that it was not consistently carried out, or that it was crossed by a conflicting design, possibly of another agent; but not that there was no design at all. The evidence that there is design would stand exactly where it stood before. So far as the objection to design goes, this would be a valid answer; but it is not one a Theist can make. Even if he can demur to the conclusion,

he is bound also to dispute the premises, by maintaining that facts are consistent with a design of perfect goodness.

The objection plainly raises the whole question of evil, so that it cannot be answered here except in the barest outline. Something, however, may be said at once to shew that the difficulty is less formidable than it looks. Physical evil is broadly that which is or may be unpleasant to us or other animals. Now the design alleged by Theists is not chiefly to prevent such unpleasantness, but to produce and to train moral persons; and till this design (and not another) is disproved no objection can arise from the presence of physical evil in the world. Moral evil is a harder question, for it cannot be designed by the God of Theism. The answer, to put it in the shortest form, is that as we trace backward a train of sequences we come to a true origin whenever we find a personal will. It is not merely that we cannot get behind it, but that if freedom is real we have come to something which so deflects, arranges, and co-ordinates the physical sequences that what goes before would not without this rearrangement be followed by what comes after it. If then moral evil or sin is our own act, our own will is a sufficient reason for it, so that God's creation is not the sin, but the freedom which made sin possible; and this is at all events a different thing. And since the idea of moral beings includes their freedom, omnipotence itself could no more make moral beings without freedom than a square without sides. It would not be a difficulty, but a contradiction in terms. This may suffice till we come to the question whether sin is permanent.

Upon the whole, if there is not design in the present working of the physical universe, the mimicry of design is so close, so general, so varied and so complicated, that we are entitled to call for serious and cogent evidence that it is no more than mimicry. And in this it will not be enough to disprove the immediate action of design in one or two cases, and then vaguely surmise that design may be entirely dispensed with in all the rest. It must be disproved either universally, or at least so generally that the outstanding cases of apparent design can fairly be treated as anomalies which a fuller knowledge may be expected to clear up. The scientific facts are hardly disputed: what is their philosophical interpretation? The *onus probandi* seems to rest on those who try to explain the admitted appearance of design by the action—not simply of blind forces, for that is agreed, but of blind forces with nothing but blind necessity to guide them.

We have had to discuss the theory of design at some length, because of its close connexion with the idea of revelation. Were it true that there is no evidence of design in the changes we see around us, no means of revelation would be left, but an intuition given to individuals. Such intuition might be certain to its receiver; but he could not convey his certainty to others. To them it would be matter of testimony, backed up it might be by the life of the witness. Such life might shew conclusively the sincerity of his belief, but we should have no outside facts to test its truth. The historical argument of Paley's *Evidences* is unassailable till we take the ground that no amount of historical

evidence is enough to prove a miracle; but it would not have even a semblance of cogency if the facts deposed to by the apostles had all been feelings limited to themselves, and none of them events which anyone could investigate at his pleasure. Even so, there might be a weighty argument in the agreement of independent witnesses. But if the intuition were universal in the sense that everyone was fully conscious of it, there would be no room for doubt; and whether it was universal or not, the proof of it might always be disputed if it could not be put in relation to external facts. If it is impossible to prove design by facts which might be verified by all, it will not easily be proved by intuitions not given to all, or at least disputed by some.

Now this means that the entire physical universe of space and time is in its measure a revelation of God. Some will answer that, being such a world as God was pleased to make, it is a declaration of his will, but not necessarily a revelation of his nature; and this is a good reply to those who go back to the mediæval conception of God (not yet extinct among us) as mere sovereign power. It is valid also against the more or less deistic teleology of the eighteenth century, which contemplated a great and skilful engineer living somewhere far away in heaven, who made the world a few thousand years ago, set its clockwork going, and left it to itself, except that every now and then he had to come back and do with his own hand something his clockwork could not do, which something we call a miracle. This theory rests on a whole series of dualisms which we now see to be false. For instance, design does not necessarily

imply an artificer working from outside and standing in such arbitrary relation to his work that it need not express anything more than his fancy at the moment. If evolution points to a God at all, it points to a God immanent in the world, however he may also transcend it—immanent as a living and formative power, and working as directly in the commonest of natural processes as in the mightiest of marvels. A God who sometimes and only sometimes works in it is unthinkable. Again, if it is a rational world (and thought is meaningless unless it is), it must be the expression, not of arbitrary or irrational will, but of a rational will: and this again must be the divine nature, for the idea that the divine will can be arbitrary is nothing else than the natural man's confusion of freedom with caprice. Yet again, we have another false dualism of infinite and finite. God is not simply something other than the world, for that which is infinite cannot be limited by the finite, as if each had its proper place assigned it in some larger whole including both. Such quasi-local distinctions are absurd. The infinite can be limited by nothing but itself. It must be the ground and explanation of the finite, the element in which the finite lives and moves and has its being, while the derived reality of the finite makes it in its measure a true expression of the infinite which lives and moves, but has not its being in it.

If then the physical universe is a true expression of eternal power and divinity, it has a value inconsistent with pantheistic or ascetic[1] forms of thought which

[1] This formally contradicts Mr. Illingworth's dictum (*Christian Character*, 60) that "asceticism is an essential ingredient in all true

make it the mere husk of the spiritual, or even its worst enemy. If God saw all that he had made, we cannot doubt that he found it very good, however it be misused and marred by sin. The world may pass away, and the fashion of it; but so long as it remains, it is as truly a divine message as any that could be spoken by an angel flying in the midst of heaven. The spiritual life is not the natural; yet there is food as well as poison for it in the world and the things of the world. Vainly the corn of wheat would drink the water of the rain of heaven, if it had not also power to take in particles of matter from the earth around it. So too the spiritual life must feed on the things of the world around it, and be nourished by the relations of natural life and of ordered society, without which no human health can long endure. The Ascetic is like the Positivist—he pours out the wine of life, and adores

human life"; but I think our difference is only verbal. One man holds that things of sense, especially the body, and most of all relations of sex, are impure and dangerous, while another who believes that "every creature of God is good" holds further that certain pleasures ought to be abstained from under certain circumstances, or even permanently by certain persons; and I do not think Mr. Illingworth distinguishes these two motives less sharply than I do. But I submit that it is inconvenient and misleading to mix up lines of conduct depending on such different motives under the general term *asceticism*. As the second line of conduct cannot be distinguished as Christian asceticism if it enters (as I fully grant it does) into all true human life, I prefer to call the first line of conduct *asceticism*, leaving the words *austerity* or *self discipline* to describe the second.

For example, the Puritan had reason (sufficient or not) for his dislike of cards; but that reason was not distrust of pleasure as such, if he was quite ready for a game of bowls. Such a man may be austere, and his self-discipline possibly mistaken; but he is not ascetic.

The greater the confusion emphasized by Mr. Illingworth, the greater the need of distinguishing radically different motives as clearly as we can.

the empty cup; the Pantheist strips his deity of all the relations of reality and worships, not indeed an idol, but a meaningless word which he takes for the name that is above every name.

Before we go further, let us glance back at the conception of God suggested by the physical universe or Nature. It may be summed up with St. Paul, as a revelation of eternal power and divinity. That there is a single force behind it, and that a force of indefinitely great power, is hardly disputed. Men of science may be Theists or Non-Theists, but we do not hear of Polytheists among them; and they are generally agreed that though there may be a case for a dualism of good and evil, it is overborne by the strong evidence of unity in Nature. If now the argument from design be accepted, that force must be allowed will (which implies personality) and indefinitely great power and intellect. Whether these indefinites are strictly infinite is a question which some will have left open, on the ground that there is nothing in the physical universe to settle it. We have seen that this argument is not worth much; but we may let it pass for the present. Not so the question of eternity, for even if the world were eternal in the sense of infinite past duration, its moving force would have to be in the same sense eternal; and if the world have beginning or end, it must be the effect of a cause which cannot be less than eternal, for even the atheist will hardly suppose that in the beginning there was nothing at all, so that nothing created something.

We see, then, revealed in Nature an eternal Person, of indefinitely great power and intellect. But this is

plainly a most incomplete conception, which gives us no idea of his real nature. Can we get no further? Some power and some intellect every living person must have; but his nature is not determined by the amount he has of these. They are outside things—only tools for use, however needful they may be. What he is himself depends on the character of the will that uses them. The man of pleasure does not cease to be a man of pleasure merely because his health is broken, and the gambler is not summarily reformed when he has gambled everything away. On the other hand, the charm of a loving nature is no way hindered by want of a capacious intellect, and even the dying man can give one last dumb sign that love is stronger than death. Amounts of power and intellect are accidents of men, not their real selves. So also must it be with God. As definite power and intellect is not the self of man, so neither can indefinite or even infinite power and intellect be the self of God. They are conditions of action, but not the will that acts. Given a will that is divine in character: if that will were to lay aside from use on earth[1] all superhuman power and intellect, it would remain as divine as ever. So far as this goes, there is no difficulty at all in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.

We must emphasize this—that the idea of God as mere power is simply unmeaning. It is not even untrue, but simply unmeaning. Power without will to set it in motion is potential, not active power such as we see.

[1] The limitation is needed to shut out a good many questions we need not discuss here.

It is like the power stored in a piece of coal, which can do nothing till it is put on the fire. God as mere power is a subject without a predicate; and though we may sympathize with a lament that the predicate cannot be found, it is hard to understand how the sentence can be all the better for having no predicate.

If, then, we are to know anything of God, we shall have to see something more than his eternal power and divinity. What sort of a will is there behind? Is it a will for right or wrong, for love or hatred, or is it simply neutral? To our former questions Nature's answer rang out sharp and clear; but now it is confused by a discordant undertone. There is indeed so much to be said for a belief in her indifference, that it is not wonderful if some have looked no further. As regards right and wrong, she works by general laws of a neutral character, crushing saint and sinner alike the moment they get in the way. In war she is on the side of the biggest battalions, without regard to right and wrong; and in peace the vilest of sinners can use her laws as effectually as the purest of saints. So far she seems thoroughly indifferent; but when we ask how these neutral laws work out in practice, we find a decided balance in favour of right. Thus right is a factor of success in war, though it may be overcome by other factors; and virtue is a real factor of success in life, though only one factor out of sundry. Still, it is only a balance; and though it does upon the whole amount to a declaration that Nature is on the side of right, it is not a clear unhesitating declaration like that of the eternal power and divinity.

So on the other score. One thing indeed is quite plain—that God is very much the reverse of love, if love is nothing more than good nature, such as is shewn by giving children what harms them because they like it. Yet much Christian and Antichristian reasoning takes for granted that a loving God would feed us this way, and wonders why he does not. Let us clear the word of weakness, and imagine a love too strong to waver in changing moods like ours, and too true to spare us whatever stimulus or punishment may be needed to urge us on to better things. Yet if we now ask Nature again, her answer is nearly the same as before. She still works by general laws; and though there is a decided balance in favour of her wish to promote the happiness of her creatures, yet it is only a balance which hardly resolves all doubts. In this case, however, the evidence may be a little stronger; for though the inflexibility of law is akin to right, it seems quite as much akin to the awful sternness of the highest and truest love. It is not only no objection to the belief of some that God is love, but the only thing consistent with it; for any variableness or shadow of turning would be conclusive proof that he is something else.

No doubt you know Huxley's grand picture of Nature playing chess with the youth. As he says, she never overlooks a mistake; but she is absolutely just. To the winner the stakes are paid with overflowing liberality, while the unskilful player is checkmated without haste and without remorse. "Without haste and without remorse." Now look at a still

grander picture, coming down from those dread times of tumult and confusion when the Assyrian London was verging to her fall, and

> The grim clans of the restless Mede

were gathering to their prey.

> The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
> And will not at all acquit the wicked.
> His way is in the whirlwind and in the storm;
> And the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Is it not the same portrait? Both Huxley and the prophet Nahum tell us how Nature has no forgiveness, and both notice her strange delay to strike. Yet there is a characteristic difference. Where Huxley tells us that Nature checkmates without haste and without remorse, Nahum says the Lord is slow to anger. May not this be true? The long delay is not uncommon: may it not admit a possibility of something better? On the plane of Nature this is pure speculation: yet I see nothing to forbid it. May there not be mercy somewhere after all? Though Nature's laws roll onward in their unrelenting sequences beyond the reach of mortal ken, there may still be forgiveness in some higher sphere; and by forgiveness I mean no rolling back that car of Juggernaut, as if the word of Nature could be broken in the world of Nature, but the triumph over it of the living spirit which exults in suffering and laughs at death for love and right, serene and calm in sure and certain hope to see and to share an everlasting victory.

LECTURE IV.

REVELATION IN MAN.

True, then, and indispensable as is the teaching of Nature, we must not be surprised to find it imperfect and obscure, for the physical universe is not the whole of the known universe, or even the highest part of it. Celsus was hardly justified even by the science of his own time in maintaining that the frogs of the marsh have as good right as men to say that the world was made for them; and in the light of modern science any such language (*pace* Haeckel) is absurd. Though we see that man is not physically very different from the orang or the chimpanzee, we see also that he is not only the *de facto* ruler of this present world, but the crown and flower of the long development of past ages. He is not only the highest point at present reached, but the end of an entire cycle. So greatly has he changed the face of the earth and subdued it, that no room is left for the evolution of still higher forms of life, unless it be from man himself. Such higher forms, if such arise, will not be animals developed, but men improved. No other line of advance is now possible, for he will summarily cut short any animal development, say of the gorilla, which may seem to endanger his supremacy. If

the central position given to him by the Ptolemaic astronomy has been taken away from him, it seems restored by the modern theory of evolution.

Science, then, is as emphatic as ever Scripture was, in declaring that man is the final outcome of the physical process—not simply as its latest phenomenon, but as the final issue of the whole. It is profoundly unscientific to speak of his appearance as "a brief and transitory episode in the history of one of the meanest of the planets." And if man is the final issue, he must also be the explanation, unless we give up reason altogether by saying that there is no explanation. Yet the explanation is manifestly not to be found on his physical side, in which he hardly differs more from the gorilla than the gorilla from the gibbon. So far he is simply an animal like the rest, with substantially the same structure, and the same instincts and passions. He is really very little better than some of the other beasts, till we take him on the side of spirit, in mind and conscience. But there the difference is enormous. If this be taken into account, he hardly differs less from the gorilla than the gorilla differs from a stone. In spirit is the only possible explanation of the whole; and this means generally that matter is to be interpreted in terms of spirit, not spirit in terms of matter. Far from giving support to a philosophy which sets aside spirit as an unimportant collateral product of the physical process, the history of the evolution distinctly points to spirit as the completion of the physical process, and therefore as its end and aim so far from the first. More than this. If evolution is an upward process, and

the production of spirit is the goal of the past cycle, then the further development of spirit must be the work of the present cycle, and the problems of the world around us must be dealt with in the light of such further development.

These conclusions are drawn from undisputed facts of science; and if rightly drawn, they are of the utmost importance. The Materialists of the last generation were so hopelessly beaten that their successors have had to disown the name. Yet they hold no very different position. Instead of making spirit as purely physical a secretion as the bile, they tell us that spirit and matter are the two sides of some undefined third thing; only, matter is the side which governs the other. Now, here it is good for both parties that issue should be joined on the right ground. The fact, if fact it be, that matter and spirit are two sides of some unknown third thing, is a fact of psychology with which religion has nothing to do. So long as we do not obscure their actual difference, their ultimate unity is quite consistent with religion. Whether it is good psychology is another matter, which we have no occasion to discuss. It is the other statement, that spirit is at least comparatively unimportant, which touches the vital interests of religion; and this, as we see, can be directly traversed on purely scientific grounds.

Turning then to the spiritual nature of man, the first thing we notice is the peculiar relation in which he stands to the physical world. He is subject, indeed, to all its "laws," like any other animal, and if he breaks them pays the same penalty of natural consequences. But

he is not simply and unconditionally subject to the first "law" that comes across him. He has a will to choose ends, a mind to devise means, and some physical strength to carry out his purposes. So he can dispense himself from any of those "laws," if he can set another law to counterwork it. He conquers Nature by obeying her. One or another of her "laws" he always must obey; but he is often able to choose means of so co-ordinating forces as to place himself under one of them rather than another; and the range of this choice is the limit—the only limit—of his power over Nature. In this region only his action is free. Beyond it he is no better than the beasts; but within it he is sovereign.

Now this limit is determined by his knowledge of the "laws" in question, and of the forces behind them. The savage has little knowledge, and therefore little power; the skilled chemist or engineer has much knowledge, and therefore much power over Nature. But it is the schoolboy's mistake to suppose that knowledge is purely intellectual, as if the best intellect secured the best knowledge as a matter of course. As he grows wiser he comes to see first that knowledge is chiefly gained by force of will to stick to work; then that force of will is chiefly given by the desire to know. A man who is earnest enough will do a good deal with an inferior intellect, while the cleverest will be stupid if he has no interest in the matter.

The desire to know may perhaps be stirred in the first instance by base motives; but it is very certain that motives wholly base will never carry a man through the drudgery of serious study. Some undergraduate

friends of mine protested base things; but their delight in solving a problem made me doubtful. No man can get up the needful enthusiasm unless he knows something of the charm of learning to know. Base motives are pure and simple hindrances, and a very little admixture of them is enough to obscure the meaning of our facts, and to corrupt our results with errors of prejudice and impatience. Even when truth is lighted on by accident, the accident itself, like the discovery of Uranus, is commonly the reward of patient work, and needs a patient and truthful worker like Herschel to see its importance. The same accident came to Lalande; but his impatience only threw away his discovery of Neptune. In every department of knowledge the mistakes arise more commonly from moral causes than from simple defects of intellect.

Now the charm of the knowledge of Nature is our discovery therein of reason and order corresponding to our own ideas of reason and order. We never come to an enchanted ground where there is no reason and order; and we are certain that we never shall. If marvels be true, we are sure that they will fall into their place in some wider scheme of reason and order. We assume without proof that Nature is a structure of reason and order; and then we find that every new fact we learn goes to confirm our assumption. We took it as a working theory; and each successive fact as we come to know it helps to verify our theory. Science, and even thought about Nature, would be impossible if there were not that in Nature which speaks to us in language our mind can understand. And that which

speaks to us in language our mind can understand cannot be anything else than a kindred mind revealed in Nature. Our true affinity and likeness to the power immanent in Nature is the necessary postulate, not only of religion, but of science, and even of thought itself. Scientific knowledge would be impossible if we had no true likeness and affinity to the mind which speaks to us in the facts of the universe; and thought itself would be no more than idle fancy if all true human thought were not the tracing of divine thought which has gone before it.

Not every thought of men, but only true thought echoes God's thought; and no child of sin is wholly true. This does not mean that all men are liars, but that untruth has many forms less gross than wilful falsehood, so that hasty thinkers hardly recognize the subtler shapes of it as untruth at all. A man may hate lying like the gates of Hades, and yet be far from wholly true. There may be just as much untruth in saying truly as in saying falsely that we believe a thing. In one of Hort's great sayings, Every thought which is base, or vile, or selfish, is first of all untrue. So it must be, for it is contrary to the order of things. If God is the ideal of conscience, every base or vile thought is a denial of him; and if men are joined by mutual duties, every selfish thought is a rebellion against the order of things. And such thought is not only in itself untrue, but it hides from us truth which we ought to see, truth which with purer hearts we should see, truth which a better man would see. Let there be no mistake here: no force of intellect can get beyond the physical universe without

more or less of this kind of truth. There is no sounder philosophical doctrine than the old saying, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The appeal is therefore not to any one man's notion of truth, which is always imperfect, but to truth as it would appear to the ideal man, whose vision is unclouded by base or vile or selfish thoughts. Such a view of truth is for us like a mountain range obscured by shifting clouds. We get glimpses here and there, and with patience and help from our companions we can put them together pretty well. We all see some truth, though no two men see exactly the same truth, or any truth in exactly the same way, and no man is true enough to see all the truth he ought to see. Still, we are in the main able to judge whether what is laid before us is true or false; and every fragment of truth we see for ourselves or receive from others is a fragment of divine thought.

For our general result so far we find that while the universe in all its parts is a revelation, all parts of it are not in equal measure a revelation. Life reveals more than matter, and conscience more than life. The physical universe is voiceless of itself. The stars of heaven circle round in silence, and all the glory of the world of land and sea tells us nothing till we lay our own mind alongside of Nature and question her with loving diligence. We must leave our pride behind us and become as little children, and listen as children listen for her words, before she will sing us her glorious epic of eternal power and divinity. Yet when her song is sung and ended we are still unsatisfied.

With all her subtle witchery she has no message for us in the face of death and misery. She is grand as Job, and just as hopeless—

> For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down,
> that it will sprout again,
> And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
> But man dieth, and wasteth away:
> Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?
> Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake,
> Nor be roused out of their sleep.

Whenever the thought crosses her mind—

> If a man die, shall he live again?

she dismisses it like Job as a dream, and comes at last to nothing better than Elihu's conclusion—

> Behold, God is great, and we know him not.

All this we think very unsatisfying. We hoped better things of Nature. Yet if the Lord were to answer us out of the whirlwind, he might ask again—

> Who is this that darkeneth counsel
> By words without knowledge?

Who is he that murmurs at Nature's ignorance, when the knowledge is in himself? If none but man can draw an answer of any sort from Nature, then man must himself take up her parable when it comes to an end. To question her further is to seek the living among the dead. Man has that in him which is above Nature, and therefore he can go further. The evolution which issued in man defines him as essentially spirit, however conditioned by matter, and marks out spirit itself as something of a higher order than Nature.

Mere intellect, as we have seen, is not the self of man, but one of the tools he uses. The man himself is the personality which uses the powers of body and mind to give itself a final expression in will; and the character of that will, and therefore of the man himself, is determined by its relation to conscience. If that relation is good, there is peace within him; if not, the man is divided against himself. As the former is plainly the higher state, and the only one which allows free development, it must be the state of the ideal man; and the ideal man must be a fuller revelation of God than the imperfect man, theologically called a sinner, in whom will and conscience are in perpetual strife.

If we now ask for a more precise description of the excellence of the ideal man, we may be told that it consists in the all-round development of all his capacities to the utmost perfection consistent with the finiteness of human nature. But this would make prudent self-culture the rule of action, which is practically pure selfishness. Supposing, however, the possibility of so construing self-culture as to give a good account of our duty to others, the excellence aimed at would mark not simply the ideal man, but the ideal man under ideal conditions; for the utmost perfection possible in this world falls far short of a perfection which might be very possible if there were a better world. Here we have but a finite time for our development, and evil circumstances are constantly compelling us to sacrifice the lower capacities to the higher, and making it a hard trial to avoid sacrificing the higher to the lower. Culture is forgotten, and too often decency, when life

is reduced by dire necessity to a struggle for bare existence. But under the best of circumstances the different capacities call for different modes of culture, so that the development must always be one-sided. The statesman cannot give his strength to learning, the student cannot have the health of an athlete, and the athlete cannot rival the deftness of a skilled mechanic. Every man must choose his own way, and renounce all excellence which can only be reached by choosing some other way. Yet the statesman cannot do without some learning, and the student will be sadly hampered without some share of the athlete's abounding health. We cannot cultivate even one of our capacities without some attention to the rest; far less can we develop them all at once to the perfection theoretically possible for each of them taken singly. We must compromise as best we can among them, for no man can in the length of time allowed us work out so vast a complex of discordant capacities. Even Jesus of Nazareth was very far from perfection in this sense of all-round development. His keen observation of Nature is no result of scientific study, his subtle knowledge of man differs widely from the cleverness of the man of the world, his grasp of history is very unlike the historian's learning, and his fresh and vivid understanding of the Jewish scriptures has very little relation to the conclusions of the critic or the archæologist.

The objection to making this all-round development of all our capacities the note of ideal perfection is not that the thing cannot be done within our threescore years and ten—for no ideal whatever can be reached in this life, but that it cannot be done at all, because

it implies a number of divergent and inconsistent aims. It is the old fallacy of defining the whole by the sum of its parts, as when the supreme good is made to be the aggregate of particular goods, or utility is defined as the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

We are on the wrong track if we take this definition of the ideal man. After all, our capacities are only tools to work with; and though a good workman keeps his tools in order, a good outfit does not necessarily imply a good workman. Character, not capacity, is the real man: and character is determined by the quality of the will. As the will is good or bad, so is the man; and if the will were perfect, namely, in relation to given circumstances, so would be the man. The quality of the will is determined by the extent of its agreement with conscience; and the endeavour to make this agreement perfect is at any rate a single self-consistent and so far possible aim. The reason of its impossibility for ourselves is not in outward circumstances which might conceivably be mended in a better world, but simply in that bias to sin which comes into the world with us, and makes it a practical certainty that we shall do sin. Thus we could imagine the aim carried out even in this life, if we could imagine a man starting free from that bias.

If then conscience is God speaking in us, as Nature is God speaking to us, the ideal man in whom conscience and will coincide will be a revelation of God; and every man will be a revelation of God so far as conscience and will coincide in him. Moreover, the ideal man is not only a revelation of God, but the highest revelation we

can have, for he is a true image of God exactly so far as he is ideal. Lack of power, lack of knowledge, and the rest of the limitations of finite existence cannot of themselves pervert his will, and therefore cannot prevent him from being, as an old writer puts it, partaker of a divine nature. Doubtless there may be depths of deity beyond our apprehension; but if the character of the divine will can be exactly expressed in terms of the ideal man, such further attributes are as irrelevant as power and knowledge. And if we can form no conception of them, then conversely they can have no relation to us, so that for us in this life they are non-existent, whatever bearings they may have on other beings or another life.

In conscience then, or more precisely in the personality expressed in will, and most truly expressed in the harmony of conscience and will, we shall find a power that can take up the tale of revelation at the point where Nature failed us. But conscience is of itself a blank formula, whose constants have to be determined before we can use it. Conscience will tell us to aim at doing right in all cases; but intellect must tell us what is the right thing to do in a given case. The judge has got his principles of law, but he cannot use them till a concrete case is laid before him; and if the case is wrongly stated he may decide it wrong. But he is more likely to find out the mistake. He may see that such an argument is unsound, or such a precedent inapplicable, or that the evidence of such a witness contradicts ascertained facts. So conscience cannot act till a concrete case arises, and may accept a wrong decision

if intellect states the case amiss. Yet conscience can often check the error at an earlier stage, for intellect most commonly goes wrong through moral failure. In any case, the right will goes a long way to secure a right decision, and is infinitely more important. The natural results of error will be what they will be; but there is neither demerit in a purely intellectual mistake, nor merit in a purely intellectual right belief. It was a good philosophy which set up for models of orthodoxy the devils who believe. Our mistakes are seldom purely intellectual. A wrong temper is even more likely to mislead us than careless observation: and when a logical conclusion (as in the case of persecution) is plainly immoral, no genuinely sincere man can fail to see that there must be a mistake somewhere, even if he cannot find it out.

Nevertheless it is the office of intellect to state the case; and the more faithfully intellect takes account of conscience and feeling as well as of pure logic, the greater will be its power not only to state the case rightly, but to bring the will into harmony with conscience. The gain is in power to know the truth, but even more in power to do the truth, for it brings the force of feeling in its highest form, the force of love, into alliance with conscience. And love—the desire of that which a man loves most of all things—is the strongest force of human nature. The cold warnings of intellect are disregarded, and even the majestic imperative of conscience is overborne. Outward power may restrain a wayward passion for a time from action; but no mere power can prevent it from breaking out

again the moment the pressure is relaxed. Desire is not to be overcome by force; but it may be slowly trained by patient effort to fix itself on a worthier object. Such training is confessedly the hardest as well as the noblest work of life: and a power which can accomplish it must be in harmony with human nature throughout its range—and therefore divine, if ideal human nature is a true image of God. The possibility is given by the fact that man's true nature is good and not evil; the difficulty is caused by the further fact that his actual nature is deeply stained with evil. His conscience is dulled, his will enfeebled, his desire set on delights of sense and self which are at their best unworthy to be his end and aim in life. Imperfect as the training to better things must always be, its results are often marvellous. As long as the great guiding forces of human nature are at variance, the man wavers among them, and serves neither God nor Mammon with a perfect heart; but their united power carries forward the will, and lifts it to heights unhoped before. Then at last the man is revealed to himself in a resistless torrent of enthusiasm, with the loftiest of conscience marking out his aims, the alertest of intellect settling his means, and the glow of love suffusing all. Common men look on with amazement. They looked for the glitter of some such tinsel as their own; and out before them pours the blinding light of molten steel. Such power is given to them that love goodness; such majesty is incarnate in the meanest of them that do the truth with the undivided strength of heart and soul as well as mind.

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Here is the secret of the knowledge of God. It requires not uncommon capacities, but the whole range of the common capacities of common men. If the entire universe is the revelation, the whole man is needed to receive it. We may miss it by misuse of our capacities; but we may also miss it by not using some of our faculties at all. Take the man who pleads conscience for trampling down intellect and charity together. What he calls conscience is only some bad passion which he assumes to be divine because it is not sensual. Take the devotee who adores the Virgin, the Church, or some other idol. Is not religion blind and worse than blind when intellect is refused a voice in the matter, and often common truth is tampered with?

On the other side, we may pass over the *profanum vulgus* of those who hear say that the search for God is futile, and take it up as a parrot-cry without caring to test its truth. Take a scientific student of a better sort. He has acuteness and learning, diligence and candour. His work is perfect of its kind, for all that intellect can do is done. What then is lacking? Just this: either he looks to intellect only for what intellect alone cannot give; or else he gives up the problem as hopeless because he rightly sees that it cannot be solved by dint of intellect. Feeling he looks on as "mere subjectivity"; and he guards himself against it as an intruder on scientific processes and a disturber of scientific accuracy. Such of course it is, if we so define science as to shut it out. But the claim here made on behalf of feeling is not that it shall in any way encroach on the sovereign right of intellect to decide all questions of truth. Our

demand is only that intellect shall have regard to all the facts of the case. The impressions of feeling are as much facts as those of sense. They may not be so easy to deal with, but there is no reason to suppose them less trustworthy; and at any rate they are facts, and we cannot hope to get at the whole truth without taking full account of them.

If the road of pure intellect is blocked, we must not straightway take for granted that there is no other. We are trifling, not investigating, unless we begin by asking seriously what sort of thing a revelation would be if there were one. As there can be no revelation except of a person to a person, this at all events it must be, and therefore a form of personal intercourse. Now all other personal intercourse depends on sympathy, which involves feeling. Indeed, it is not too much to say that our knowledge of men is strictly measured by our sympathy with them, for there is no getting at a man's real self without loving sympathy. If so, we cannot safely take for granted that feeling must be severely laid aside when in the search for God we come to what cannot be other than the highest form of personal intercourse. It is only through feeling that we can reach the best things of this life in childhood and marriage and parentage, in patriotism and friendship, and the lofty joys of willing service in all its forms. Is it surprising that we cannot scale the heights of heaven some other way?

It is no answer to say that feeling leads men into terrible mistakes. So does conscience, for that matter, and so does intellect, and for the same reason. We put

asunder things which God hath joined, and lay on one of them a burden which can only be borne by the three together. Feeling in particular is like the city gate, through which all comers pass. Anything may stir it, from the stars of heaven to the yellow primrose, from the noblest of thoughts to the basest: and the attraction of a thing is in itself the same whether the idea be true or false, or the conduct right or wrong. Stolen waters have always been sweet. So if conscience and intellect are not allowed to sift these attractions, feeling is left at the mercy of unreasoning sense and prejudice. Conversely, intellect works with a minimum of feeling on the ground of science, because there we never deal with facts, but with abstractions we have made from them in order to bring them within the range of our scientific methods. It would work just as freely on imaginary data, and might build up from them with faultless reasoning a purely imaginary science. Given its data, astrology might be just as logical as astronomy. Science works by comparison, neglecting things supposed to be unimportant for the purpose in hand, so that its results on concrete things cannot be more than approximate. Even astronomy can boast no more splendid triumph than the Lunar Theory: yet it is no more than an approximation; and it is only made possible by neglecting certain factors of the case.

Feeling is at its lowest in scientific study, though even there a man is not likely to go far unless his heart is in the work. We need it more when we pass from facts of matter to facts of mind, because there we come upon the irreducible element of will. We say for certain

what a stone or a planet will do, because we take for granted that we know all the forces acting; but we cannot say for certain what a dog will do, because a dog has a will of his own. Still more is feeling needed to understand a man, for his will is more complicated than a dog's will. In fact, most of our practical mistakes in dealing with men arise from want of sympathy to look at things occasionally with their eyes as well as with our own. Most of all shall we need sympathy for that highest form of personal intercourse which the knowledge of God must be. Thus if He is perfect goodness we cannot know Him even in part unless we look at things with eyes of goodness. To ignore feeling here is quite as foolish as it would be to ignore intellect. It means that, before asking whether we can have knowledge of God or not, we make an assumption which cuts off all possibility of such knowledge.

But the claim to shut out feeling, which is made in the name of science, is made on general grounds of its danger in all search for knowledge, not on any grounds peculiar to the search for God; so that it cannot be limited to that particular search. Yet if we try it on our next neighbour we come to a *reductio ad absurdum*. We perceive sundry changes in things; and, on the strength of a more or less sympathetic comparison of them with changes we know to be caused by ourselves, we infer not only the existence but the character of a living person more or less like ourselves. We have true knowledge of him from the changes he causes. We could not do this without sympathetic comparison: but we do it. We pass, that is, "from the affirmation

of analogous action to the affirmation of identical quality." If there are any who do not see the cogency of this logic, the answer is simple. They cannot offer us an argument against it without admitting it. If it is not valid, they cannot reason with us, for they cannot have knowledge of any persons whatever: and if it is valid, it cannot be limited to our neighbour. If some changes compel us to recognize the existence and character of one person more or less like ourselves, there is no evident reason why other changes should not as legitimately compel us to recognize the existence of another Person more or less like ourselves. And this is an argument whose premiss—that the changes are like changes of our own causing—cannot be reached without feeling.

Some will reply shortly that we cannot argue from finite to infinite. But this is not what we are doing just now. We are arguing simply that if one set of facts is evidence of a person A, another set may similarly be evidence for a person B. Assuming the general soundness of the argument, it is not invalidated if the second set of facts further suggests that the second Person is infinite. Infinity is not a thing whose appearance puts an end to reasoning. It is not such in mathematics. A proportion does not cease to hold merely because the first ratio is of finite and the second of infinite quantities. The only question is whether the ratios are equal. So here: analogy is not of things, but of relations. The only question is whether the second set of facts suggests a person in the same way as the first. If it does, the argument is valid. Whether such

person is finite or infinite is a further question which has nothing to do with the one before us.

It appears, then, in general that feeling is an element in all reasoned knowledge, and in particular that knowledge of persons, and especially knowledge of God, is impossible without it. Let us therefore look at it a little closer.

There is usually more or less difficulty—except in the case of infants—in drawing a clear line between instinct and unconscious reasoning. On one side instinct is in itself so rational that it looks like reasoning: on the other, reasoning may be so quick that we mistake it for instinct. The difficulty is only one of our reminders that human nature is not a bundle of isolated faculties, but an organic whole in which all faculties work together. So far, however, as feeling can be separated from reasoning, it would seem to be instinctive. In most cases most things affect most men in much the same way; and the exceptions are often easily explained. Suffering and danger are usually unpleasant; but sober duty or heroic courage or even reckless animalism may disregard them. What is good food generally may be loathsome to certain persons, or to any one in certain states of health. Some people seem hardly to care how many lies they tell; and others will go into sentimental raptures over some particularly base and treacherous murder. But in saying on trifling matters that persons have peculiarities, and in serious cases that they are diseased in body or mind, we recognize the fact that other feelings are the rule, and these exceptions. And here it is worth notice that moral perversion which

amounts to mental disease is very commonly little more than excess of selfish vanity. On the other hand, we have cases where feeling is modified or reversed by conscious reasoning, in the astronomer's delight in the eclipse which scares the savage, or in our resentment of advances from an enemy which we should value from a friend.

Now science has never fathomed instinct. We may trace the evolution of the circumstances which call it out, or of the bodily organs by which it works, or we may study the results of its action and the part it plays in life: but what it is in itself is more than we can even guess. Some cases of it may possibly be explained as "a survival of purposed action in past generations"; but in others (matters of sex for example) that purposed action is not habitual enough to make its transmission plausible, even if it be possible. And if it were, habit itself is instinct, so that we should only explain one difficulty by another of the same kind. Instinct seems a deeper mystery than intellect, and may be more nearly connected with the final secret of life. It comes up from unknown deeps; and somehow it comes up true. In special cases it may be misled by altered circumstances, so that it needs a certain amount of check from reason; but in ordinary cases it is true. It is true in the birds that come down from the north on the wings of the autumn winds, and return in the spring to the bright summer of their arctic islands. It is true in the helpless infant which clings to its mother's breast from the first hour of its life. It is true in the sudden flash of anger that wards off sudden violence. Is it not also

true in the sudden shock of horror that greets outrageous wickedness done before the face of men? Is it true in animals, and only false in man? and in man only when we reach his higher nature? Some will say that moral feeling cannot be instinct, because there are men without it. True; and others have argued themselves out of it, or drunk themselves out of it. But is it reasonable to maintain that what is wanting in the savage or the drunkard (why not add the idiot?) is no part of human nature? If most men have that horror, and seem to have it in proportion to their general soundness of mind, we cannot help concluding that those who have it not are wanting in something they ought to have.

Feeling is always in advance of thought, for the moment it begins to be verified by thought it opens out new lines for further thought, and gives us glimpses of more than we can express in words. Even malice, which is feeling too, though of the wrong sort, has every now and then a touch of keen insight in the midst of its colossal blunders. Now feeling always has something of the character of a personal relation. Its most developed forms are personal relations; and we feel something personal even in the impersonal forces of Nature. Languages differ in plasticity to personification, but primitive man usually personified natural forces, and even now the poet constantly uses the language of personification, and the student himself can hardly avoid it. It is natural to us. The man of science personifies the Nature he loves, the Anglican his Church in spite of its own Liturgy; and each derives weakness as well as power from the metaphors to which he subjects himself.

If we cannot say what feeling is in itself, we know pretty well how it affects us. Take its highest earthly form. Love seems to rest on a recognition of likeness, perhaps disguised by great differences. But likeness in evil is a rope of sand, as thieves and traitors have found in all ages. Even the physical attraction which is the ground and support of marriage needs to be not indeed ignored or suppressed, but transfigured by something of a higher order. So we rise higher as the higher self is revealed, till in the highest love we recognize through all differences of circumstance and character something akin to what is highest in ourselves. There is no vision of joy like that of looking up to heights of truth and goodness which tell us that other men have realized ideals of our youth which we ourselves defiled and cast aside. There is no such illumination of heart and soul and mind at once as loving reverence for goodness in our fellow men, no such call to lofty action as the enthusiasm that kindles from another's burning zeal for truth and mercy. Unless we sin the sin of sins by turning away in bitter hatred from the vision of goodness, we cannot choose but obey the overpowering impulse to find our true self in self-surrender to it. Personal influence is the force that moves the world.

So far we have studied the conception, or as yet rather the sources of revelation, very much as if each of us was a solitary thinker with nothing to occupy him but the philosophical investigation of Nature and himself. But man is a social animal; and of this fact we have now to take more full account. Even the hermit who tries to limit all feeling to the contemplation of God

cannot prevent it from also going forth towards men, and continually tormenting him with memories of the City of Destruction he left behind. However he may hate his country and his kindred and his father's house, he finds it hard work to forget them. But why should he try to forget them? asks the man that is clothed and in his right mind. In all states of life which seem natural and healthy a man's relations to others, and the consequences arising from them, claim the larger part of his thoughts and almost entirely determine his occupation. Bread for himself is bread for his children, and work for himself is work for others. In these relations therefore his true self must be chiefly realized, so far as it is realized at all. It follows that life is the highest study, not philosophy, so that self-culture is no more than a means, not an end in itself. Even the knowledge of truth is debased if we make it a selfish pleasure, instead of a help to do such work as lies before us. For his own sake the individual must be subject to society, though for society's own sake again the subjection must not be complete, for under any form of government the individual is a part of the society, and even the slave influences it as much as the free man, though in a different manner.

But if our highest work is to do truth, and the knowledge of truth is no more than the means of doing truth, it follows that life rather than philosophy or science is the highest revelation; and that feeling, which governs our relations to others, is even more needed for its recognition than the intellect which is supreme in abstract studies. But here the case divides. Others

have done truth in the past, or failed to do it, and we ourselves are doing truth now, or failing to do it. Hence the revelation of God which rises higher than Nature is not single, but twofold. There is a revelation coming back from the past, and a revelation unfolding in the present—a revelation in history, and a revelation in life.

If the lower revelation is incomplete, the higher revelations are fragmentary. The beginnings of history are lost, and the future is hidden; the beginnings of life are forgotten, and the end is not yet. Only by faith, by trust in the reason and order of the universe, can we feel sure that some far-off divine event will bring to a worthy consummation the great development whose latest issues on this earth of ours are history and life. So it must be, unless Chaos rules; but no purely intellectual belief can make that hope the moving force in life it ought to be if it is true. We cannot round off a philosophical system on fragments like these; nor is it needful that we should. The lamp that leaves the distant hills in darkness may be strong enough to shew us the road before us.

Men in all ages have seen God in history, and sometimes more vividly than they cared to tell. Indeed, its great catastrophes are as impressive as the earth's volcanic outbursts, and have an individual character which is less easily forgotten. The earthquake of Lisbon stirred more doubts than all the deists; but it is no such epoch of human thought as the French Revolution. Its lasting effects will not compare with those of the dreary Thirty Years' War, which exhausted the worst of

religious hatred, and compelled the nations henceforth to do their fighting with some regard for humanity. There were no more such horrors as the Spanish Fury or the Sack of Magdeburg. Even scoffers are overawed when some great empire crashes like a house of cards, and the thoughts of men sway back to the belief of olden times, Verily there are gods that judge in the earth. France herself could see at the time the meaning of Napoleon's fall, though afterward she made herself a lying legend; and few there are among us, of those whose hairs are whitening now, who can look back unmoved on the dread winter of the siege of Paris.

But the chief meaning of history, and its chief power to suggest and shape the teachings of nature and life, is not in the grand dramas where we seem to hear God speaking straight from heaven. As the still small voice was greater than the earthquake and the storm, so the silent movements of history are greater than the great catastrophes which reveal them to us. We seem to wake of a sudden; and lo! the earth is changed. The old landmark is gone, the old wisdom is confounded, the good old custom is become a grievous wrong. When Amos defies the priest of Bethel, or Luther dares the wrath of Charles v, the meaning of the scene is not simply that a brave man takes his life in his hand, but that the undercurrent of history has so brought round the thoughts of men that the issue on which he does it is felt to be decisive. Hannibal at the gates of Rome summed up the heroic tenacity of the old republic, and Alaric the administrative and moral failure of the Empire. Queen Elizabeth's defeat on the monopolies

revealed a century's growth of the Commons of England; and the enthusiasm of the Tennis Court Oath proclaimed it time that the rotten splendour of the old French monarchy should cease from cumbering the earth. As we drift in the darkness down the stream of time, with the swirl of the torrent below and the roll of the thunder above us, the great scenes of history are the flashes of lightning that show us the banks of the river. They may be gone in a moment; but we know better where we are.

In humdrum periods of history or in prosaic days of disenchantment, the forces are silently gathering for the next great conflict. From the exhausted fifteenth century sprang the bursting life of the sixteenth, and the ignoble eighteenth was followed by the mighty struggles of the nineteenth. If Time is the greatest of innovators, his touch is so gentle that we can hardly trace its working, till some day the rough hand of man tears away the veil and shows us the work already done. History is the framework of all other teaching, and very largely determines its character. Science made slow progress in ancient times, because polytheism obscured the unity of nature, and race and class antagonisms the unity of mankind and of history. An atmosphere of legend and imposture discouraged accurate observation, pride of intellect preferred clever theories to prosaic facts, and the worship of beauty tended to contempt of all that was not æsthetic. Even the Greeks had uphill work against these difficulties. Christianity prepared the way for better things. Its doctrine of the unity of God implies, and was seen to imply, unity in nature, in

history, in mankind, and in life; its gospel of an incarnation consecrated nature in all its parts to something higher than æsthetic interest: and the historic truth claimed for the revelation was a perpetual challenge to closer and more accurate critical and scientific investigation. But the advance of science was still delayed, first by the educational and economic exhaustion of the ancient world, then by the rudeness of the northern nations, and then again by the arrogance of a Church whose polytheistic atmosphere of legend and imposture belied its claim to hold the keys of all truth; and yet for another century again by the clamour of the wars of religion. It is not accidental that the great advance began after the Peace of Westphalia, and became rapid when something like settled peace returned to Europe after Waterloo. Nor is it unnatural that, while the research of the eighteenth century was coloured by the more abstract sciences of mathematics and astronomy, that of our own time takes its tone from the more concrete study of biology. In the same way Greek philosophy brought to the surface the conception of universal duty, Roman jurisprudence that of universal law, while Christianity joined them both in Christ's claim to sovereignty over thought and action alike. If the early church preached the supremacy of conscience as it had never been preached before, the Latin ages taught powerfully the need of order, and the Reformation broke in pieces an evil order to make room again for truth and reason. Every age has some new teaching to declare, but in any case it only comes to light in the fulness of time, when the historical environment begins

to make it possible. Thus the imperial conception of God grew up with the Empire, and decayed with the rise of modern nations, while the "carpenter theory" had to wait for the advance of science, and is itself dissolving in the light of clearer knowledge. A universal Church seemed needed to match the universal Empire; but an age of nations could dispense with it. So too we shall find that the changes of religious thought in the last half century spring quite as much from political and social changes as from the working of scientific ideas.

But how shall we venture to discuss the revelation through life? Such a revelation must lie chiefly in those most intimate personal experiences which may not be profaned by common curiosity, and cannot be fully told to anyone. In our Founder's impressive words, The prophet may tell his vision, but he cannot give his own anointed eye. More than this, there is said to be in it a mystery inscrutable even to the man who lives by it, —a mystery known indeed, he tells us, with an intense and vivid certainty to which all common knowledge is no more than mist and twilight, yet in its depth unmeasured and in its fulness inexhaustible. He will sooner doubt the solid earth he treads on than the voice that speaks to him through the changes and chances of this mortal life. That voice has not only or even chiefly to do with passionate intuitions and subconscious perceptions, for it seems to sound as clearly and more often in deliberate and reasoned conviction that this or that is right or wrong, and must at every hazard be done or left undone. But is it real after all? We

have ample evidence to decide the question. Though we cannot have the experience of others, we have their testimony, and we can judge for ourselves of the results. Even as an illusion, the belief has to be accounted for; and if it is an illusion, it is beyond comparison the mightiest of human illusions. This illusion has been the great nation-making, nation-binding, nation-breaking power in history, the great guiding, lifting, transfiguring power of common life. This illusion has not only nerved men and even tender women to face a cross of shame before the world, but given them the higher courage and still higher patience needed for the obscure and hopeless toil of continual failure in the work that seemed appointed them. If the greatest force of history and life is illusion, can we trust even the reasoning which professes to prove it such? Can we believe any longer in such a power of reason and order working in the world as even science requires, and cannot do without?

Yet illusion lies very near. Like the pillar of cloud which moved behind the camp of Israel, religion has a side of cloud and darkness, as well as one of light. It has inspired, or seemed to inspire, some of the vilest deeds of history, from the abominations of the Amorites downward to the organized falsehood of the Jesuits *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. Yea, many a time have Moloch and Belial been transformed into angels of light. No marvel if truth and common decency have driven some men to hate religion. Yet even these infernal caricatures of things divine are at one with the purest and loftiest faith, so far as they declare the unearthly power that lies in our relation to things unseen—a power

before which when once its might is roused all common passions fall away like cobwebs from a strong man's limbs.

Moreover, all religions are agreed in the general aim of maintaining and if need be restoring right relations to unseen powers: they differ in having higher or lower conceptions of these powers, and more or less rational methods of worship. Given a Moloch, we know what sort of sacrifices he wants; given a Father in heaven, he must be more ready to hear than we to pray. But what business had men to believe in a Moloch at all? They were not without the natural feeling which revolts at such sacrifices, but they stifled it in obedience to a supposed divine command. Yet a true revelation, if such there be, cannot be a mere command from outside. It is the recognition of the divine without by the divine within, and must therefore appeal for final verification to our sense of truth and right, so that it is self-convicted if it certainly contradicts them. If the message came to me which seemed to come to Abraham, no amount of evidence could prove it divine in the face of the certainty grown up since Abraham's time, that my son's life is not mine to sacrifice. So too if Jesus of Nazareth literally meant a man to hate his father and his mother, we should know that his inspiration was not divine. Here is a clear test. It must be used reasonably (which it is not always) but a professedly divine message which will not stand it must be rejected. If God is good, he cannot command what we see to be evil; and if he is not good, the case for revelation disappears in the general break-up of thought.

But if the Moloch-worshippers took the wrong method, it does not follow that their general aim was either mistaken or futile. Mistake in some cases does not prove illusion in all cases. Were a revelation quite true, it could not fail to be grievously perverted by men whose ideas of God were on a lower plane, for we cannot safely take for granted that it must of necessity be so clear that nobody can mistake its meaning, and so threatening that nobody will venture wilfully to disobey it. The right conclusion from the abominations of Moloch and others is not a hasty condemnation of all religion indiscriminately, but a caution against such forms of it as may prove contrary to sound reason. Meanwhile there is strong evidence that the belief in communion with the unseen is not all illusion. Hardly any belief which is not absolutely universal is confirmed by so vast a convergence of sober testimony from those who claim to know it by experience, and to speak of that they know. The evidence is not limited to one age of the world or one stage of civilization, one race or nation, one form of religion, one rank in life, one type of character or state of health. It seems fairly spread over all periods of history, all stages of culture, all diversities of individual training and position. It takes a colour from everything that influences life and character, yet seems always essentially the same. And is not this cumulative evidence the surest proof of objective reality? Through the endless variations in the accounts of it given by those who claim to know it by experience, no fair-minded student can mistake its general and normal tendency to an intense and vivid

life of purity and kindliness. When this is not its outcome, we always find reason to think that something cankers it. Either the man's belief in it is unreal; or his methods are mistaken, as with the worshippers of Moloch. Peace and joy seem as normal to it as righteousness itself, and are seldom entirely wanting. Thus though the gloom of mediæval religion well represented the grossness and disorder of feudal society, it was not without its hope. Beyond the *Dies iræ* rose *Jerusalem the golden.*

Any attempt to explain so general a fact by partial causes is plain trifling. No theory can be accepted unless it finds causes rooted deep enough in human nature to work through this immense variety of circumstances. Morbid conditions, for instance, are often found in cases of religious as well as of scientific or literary or any other sort of eminence; and there may be some vestiges of truth in the idea that eminence generally is more or less allied to such conditions. In the main, I should say the fact is otherwise; but genius undoubtedly calls for such industry and strain of nerve as will find out any constitutional weakness. Often, indeed, it is just physical weakness which suggests a line of action where strength of will can win eminence in spite of weakness. In some cases physical weakness may even be an advantage, for there is no such vivid feeling as that given to some of those who suffer, and there is no true insight without feeling. But these are particular considerations; and morbid as distinct from vivid feeling would seem rather a general hindrance to all eminence than a special help to any particular sort of eminence.

If morbid conditions not unfrequently attend the origin of religious conviction, their occurrence is natural enough in a trying time of moral unrest. Imagine a man brought face to face with the appalling fact he never realized before, that God sees all his goings, and sees them with displeasure! Or imagine him persuaded that God calls him to bear witness—and witness he must—of some terrible truth which may cost him not his life only, but the hatred of his country and his nearest friends! It is grim earnest, if anything in life is earnest; and morbid conditions are not unlikely to accompany such a fearful strain of heart and soul and mind till the man either settles down into the new life, or falls back into the old. Further evidence is needed to shew, first that morbid conditions originate the new life, then that they sustain its later growth; and yet further evidence will still be needed to give us reasonable assurance that this is commonly the fact, before we can look on such conditions as more than a partial and therefore insufficient cause. And there are many cases where such a cause can hardly be suggested. Of Jesus of Nazareth, who fills all Christian hearts, a Gifford Lecturer must speak with some reserve; but there is a tremendous dilemma there which will have to be faced. Assuming that the stupendous claim ascribed to him is false, one would think it must have disordered his life with insanity if he made it himself, and the accounts of his life if others invented it. Later cases are plenty. John Wesley made some bad mistakes; but nobody can read his Diary or study his political action without seeing in him one of the

soundest and most sensible men of the eighteenth century. If Newton and Faraday were not sound and healthy minds, it may go hard with Darwin and Huxley. If Butler and Lightfoot lived in a morbid state, Haeckel and Karl Pearson may do well to make sure of their own sanity. So likewise of countless common men, who tell us that the vision is real, however doubt and carnal fear may dim our eyes. We can rule out their evidence if we start from the axiom that personal conviction of religion is of itself morbid, but hardly in any other way: and that way is begging the question.

No, gentlemen, now that we stand before the mightiest experience of history and life, at least let our words be sober and wary. It will not suffice for opponents to tell us that our experience is not theirs, for they could not remain opponents if it were. May not experience be true which is not universal? It is in science: why not in religion? If ours is true, we can explain why they are not conscious of it as theirs; but if it is false, they cannot explain why we are assured that we know it to be ours. We have found no initial impossibility in the belief that there is a divine revelation in the ordering and guidance of our life, and we have seen that it cannot be accounted for by morbid conditions. What is it then? An enthusiasm no doubt—we can agree so far—and often a white-hot enthusiasm. But what is its quality? Take it in its best and purest form, as you are bound to do, and judge for yourselves; but judge the righteous judgment. Survey first our baser passions—envy, malice, cruelty—and tell us if you can that the enthusiasm is of the earth earthy

which consumes them like a furnace blast. Then call up the bright ideals of truth and purity and gentleness and love unfeigned, and tell us again that there is nothing divine in the enthusiasm which flowers aloft, like the flower in the sunless cavern, to their marvellous light. Is it all no better than the appetites of beasts? If so indeed it be, let us take Chance for our Father in heaven, and resign ourselves for ever to the reign of Chaos and Ancient Night.

LECTURE V.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I.

We have now come to a point from which it may be well to look back once again on the results we have reached. We found, then, a lower revelation on the existence and structure of the physical universe, and a higher in the spiritual nature of man, in his historical development from the past, and in the personal relations and experiences of life. We assumed as a working hypothesis that the power behind Nature is rational and good, because we cannot otherwise reason at all; and each step of our investigation confirmed the truth of our assumption. The revelation in the physical universe assured us of the unity of God, of his eternity, and of power and wisdom greater that any assignable power and wisdom; but it left open the practical question, whether the divine nature is wholly right and good. Such it seemed to be, but not so plainly as to leave no room for doubt. It is not till we question the spiritual nature of man that we reach clear evidence of infinite rightness and infinite power and wisdom, though it still remained a venture of faith to believe

in an infinite goodness which is only seen in part. The revelation in history confirms all this on a large scale, but (apart from any special revelation there may be) it does not seem to add much new matter. The question of goodness in particular becomes clearer: but is by no means finally settled in the sense that it becomes matter of demonstration. First principles must always remain assumptions, however they may be confirmed by facts. Even the revelation of life, which does seem decisive, is decisive only for those who recognize it in life; so that this question of infinite goodness remains open for others. Many things indicate that God is good; but on the easy-going theory of goodness it can always be replied that some things point another way. Many have borne witness of that they know; but it is always possible to insist on seeing and handling for ourselves. We have reason for our trust, cumulative reason convergent from the whole realm of thought; but we cannot demonstrate the unseen. Even to-morrow's sunrise must always be matter of faith. If there be a special revelation, we may find that one purpose of it is to give us in a generally intelligible form some special ground for fuller and more unhesitating trust.

This brings us nearer to the question whether a special revelation may be expected in addition to the general revelation already surveyed. Such revelation, if such there be, must appeal to the same faculties as the other, though it may call them into more vivid action, and it must give the same general account of God and the world, though perhaps from a new point of

view. The mere possibility of such a revelation will not detain us long. There may be particular objections to particular limitations; but if a revelation be possible at all, no general objection seems valid against anything which is grounded on the general revelation and does not contradict it, and in particular implies neither ignorance nor fickleness on God's part. We might safely reject an alleged revelation which spoke of sundry gods, or of one capricious or immoral God, or preached *de contemptu mundi*, or evaded the final appeal to reason by setting above it some infallible authority or mystic intuition. Apart from self-contradictions like these, there is no evident *a priori* reason why the general revelation should not be extended or made plainer if need arise; nor do we know enough of God's plans or of the effects of sin to be sure that there is no such need. Nor would it necessarily imply ignorance or caprice on God's part, for it might have been foreseen and provided for. The Lamb might have been slain from the foundation of the world, and for us men, not simply for our salvation.

It is also generally agreed that there is room for a special revelation, in the sense that it might in many ways prove helpful. If the Deists were satisfied that it could add nothing to Natural Religion, they seem to stand alone. The Agnostic may doubt or the Naturalist deny the possibility of revelation, but neither of them imagines that we could not do with more light than we have already; and even the Pantheist might almost forgive the utter shattering of his theories if he gained by it an authentic view of the world *sub specie æternitatis*.

Common men, however, feel theoretical difficulties much less than the pressure of evil in the world. For one who looks to things divine in simple desire of knowledge, thousands are driven by the sense of pain in this world to seek for help from another. The enemies of religion are not far wrong in thinking that it will cease to be a power in the world if they can make men happy without it. There is virtue in that *If*; but the reasoning seems sound. Without the pressure of toil and sickness and sorrow and death, I fear few of us would care to face the moral facts of life, and find a meaning for them. The lotus-eaters do not seem to have had much of a religion, and are not recorded to have produced a philosopher. It is not on idle questions but on this urgent problem of evil that we should look for light to a special revelation, if such there be. In any case it is most important to settle the question whether there is one, for we cannot otherwise be sure that we have before us all the conditions of the problem that are within our understanding.

In much current discussion it seems taken for granted that the actual development of evil in the world is final, in the sense that there is no power in the universe which will ever be able to alter it. Some of the ancients did so think; but it is a strange idea to come upon in an age of evolutionary theories in science and history, and reforming practice in society. Yet it is logically implied in much current literature, though clearly it is more than either theist or atheist can safely assume, if he believes at all in either evolution or reform. Perhaps those who have most clearly realized the slow-

moving advance from matter to life, from life to conscious life, and from conscious life to moral life, will be the slowest to foreclose all further advance from moral life to sinless life, which if it be possible must needs have the power of an endless life. At any rate, we cannot assume that evil as we see it now is permanent, unless it can be shewn that the entire evolution is completed. And this, I think, is more than anyone will maintain.

We need not further discuss the general question just now. Our present concern with the evils of the world is only so far as they affect themselves. They have been roughly classified in familiar words as distresses of mind, body, and estate; but there is no Stoic paradox in adding that distress of mind is not only the worst form of distress, but the sting of all distress. Trouble of estate is serious only so far as it brings bodily privation or mental suffering; and even disease is fairly tolerable when it leaves the mind cheerful. Wealth is a poor thing without health to use it; and health itself is forgotten in mental anguish.

We may leave the pessimists to catalogue in detail the miseries of life. They are no doubt the most competent persons. Suffice it that there are physical evils the work of Nature, rising upward from the mud of the streets to the grandeur of a Martinique eruption; and moral evils caused by men, downward from our neighbour's fit of temper to the lawless violence of the worst governments and the wilful corruption of life by the worst religions. Now how do men behave in the face of them? Very variously, of course. One man

bears up, while another is crushed. One turns cynic, another sees in them the will of heaven. One is stirred to greater efforts, while his neighbour grows listless. One blasphemes, while another prays. One forgets the past, another broods over it instead of acting. One looks with hope to the future, while the next will not hear of hope at all, at least in this life.

Besides the contrast here of active and passive characters, there is a deeper one which cuts across it; for the fundamental contrast is between attitudes of acceptance and attitudes of rebellion, towards what is recognized as the true order of things, or in semitheistic language, the will of heaven. Active acceptance is when a man frankly makes heaven's will his own will, and strives faithfully to do whatever duties he sees before him, while in passive acceptance he aims at nothing better than what some call saintly resignation. Active rebellion shews itself in open grumblings and in fierce endeavours to do something that pleases us better than the duty we see before us, while rebellion of a passive sort, though no less real, comes out in the immoral sophistries with which we make believe that wrong is right, and in the whole tribe of irrational disgusts and pessimistic discontents which undermine the faith of reasoning men, that the world's order is at bottom rational and moral.

Of those four possible attitudes, only the first is a right one. It does not mean passive obedience to everything that comes to pass, but active concurrence alike in joy and sorrow, with a power believed to be working in the world for good. It cannot accord with

the true order of things that wrong should be done by men, though it may so accord that we should bear it if it is done, while it is still our duty to do the best we can to cure it. In some cases the active attitude may be reduced to a genuine saintly resignation by sheer inability to do more, though even then it differs *toto cœlo* from the spurious resignation which is quite content with itself. That sort of resignation is an unreal acceptance, very near akin to the pessimist rebellion, and essentially no better, for there is always a self-righteous grumble at the bottom of it.

It is easy to see how these three rebellious attitudes arise. We like our own way, and are vastly pleased with ourselves so long as things go smoothly. But when checks come—either serious troubles or the petty worries we often feel as keenly—rebellion is the impulse of the natural man. It often overcomes the best of us in a first assault; and with most of us it is more or less chronic, for there are few who have not brooded over their trials till they are at times more than half persuaded that life is nothing but misery. One confirmed rebel puts on pious resignation, another fumes and curses, and yet another gives himself up to murmuring; but in their hearts they are all agreed against the final postulate of rational thought and action—that the world's order is at bottom rational and moral. The grumbling temper they have in common is not only the most profoundly irreligious of all tempers, but the most fatal to reasoning action and even to truthful thinking, for the setting up likings of our own against the natural or the moral order of things is first of all

untrue. How can truth or reason or healthy action in the world be expected from men whose wills are cancered by the πρῶτον ψεῦδος of rebellion against its rational and moral order?

If the earthquake and the storm have slain their thousands, these rebellious passions have slain their tens of thousands. By far the largest part of human misery is the work of human impatience and discontent. By impatience of thought we pervert or set aside the evidence before us, that we may give ourselves licence to believe what pleases us better than truth. By impatience of action we rush at something we like better than right and goodness, pushing our neighbours out of the way and if need be tyrannizing over them. In a more passive discontent we cherish our grievances against the order of things, and fill our hearts with bitterness. It is the spirit of rebellion which far more than any intellectual error misdirects and weakens all our powers of thought and action. Now suppose an alleged revelation were so to emphasize the brighter side of life, and so to assure us of the ultimate goodness of the order of things as to strengthen well-disposed persons in their hard battle with the misguiding and enfeebling rebelliousness of the natural man. Would any serious thinker tell us that such a revelation was doing work that is not needed? Would he not rather feel that it was a straight blow at the central evil of the world, the evil heart of unbelief? Would not this be a presumption so far of its truth?

On the antecedent probability of a special revelation we touched before in our discussion of the general

question; and we have not since then found any new factors in the problem. The question still lies between the misery which might call forth such a revelation and the sin which might keep it back; and perhaps we shall still do well not to be too sure either way. It would be rash to object beforehand to the limitation of place or time implied in a special revelation, for we cannot say —even Matthew Tindal expressly refused to say—that justice requires the same light to be given to all men. It only requires each man to be judged by the light which he has, and not by that which he has not. We are not competent judges beforehand of the need for such limitations; and indeed it might prove that a local or temporary limitation was the best security for a permanent and universal extension. Nor need there be any objection to special methods as such, for a special revelation, being *ex hypothesi* more or less different from the general revelation, is not unlikely to work by more or less different methods. However, one aspect of the question seems much changed since we last discussed it. If God is indeed infinite goodness, the appeal to him of human misery must be much stronger than we could then assume it to be. If even a man who is utterly merciless is utterly hateful, we can hardly believe that God is utterly careless of the great and bitter cry that comes up from earth to heaven. Had man no bias to rebellion, the general revelation might have sufficed to keep him in obedience to the true order of things; but if as a matter of fact it has not so sufficed, there seems to be nothing incredible beforehand in the supposition that such a God may have given him further and more special help

Some will go further, and say that such a God could not fail to give it sooner or later. This is certainly a strong position, and may be a very sound one: but for the purposes of a Gifford Lecturer it will suffice to take the lower ground, that there appears at any rate no reason beforehand why such help should not be given.

If then we were going further on this line, we might at once discuss historically such evidence as there may be for any alleged particular or special revelation. If we have had to pass lightly over many thorny questions, there are some advantages in a rapid review; and I think we have not left the worst of the philosophical difficulties unfaced. Our concern, however, is not with the fact of a past revelation, if fact it be, but with the idea we ought to form of one supposed possible in the future: and we have still a little work to do before we can put our question of what its purpose and chief end is likely to be. What precisely do we mean by a special revelation? I have used the word in a loose and popular way, since my initial notice that I could not assume it as self-evident that a special and a miraculous revelation are necessarily identical: but now we shall have to look at the matter more closely.

All revelation, then, must be from God and of God, given to men and for men, communicated on God's part by inspiration in the wide sense which comprehends the whole of his preparation of men for receiving it, and received on the part of man by the joint energy of feeling, thought, and will; and all revelation, even if it come through the natural order of things, requires action in the moral or supernatural order of persons. So far all

revelations must be alike; and though they may differ in their subject-matter, in the purity of their teaching, and in the depth of the insight they give, such differences as these may not of themselves warrant us in a separate classification of one or more as special. But there is another possible distinction that will. It is historically evident that some nations, some persons, some periods of time, some series of events, have influenced much more than others the spiritual development of mankind. If we compare from this point of view the Greeks and the Phœnicians, Plato and Xenophon, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or the Roman and the Mongol empires, we shall see the difference between the main stream and a backwater. But if this inequality cannot be denied, neither can the possibility that God's general providence over the world may culminate in some more special spiritual development of a part of the world. There is nothing against it but the assumption which was too rash for Matthew Tindal, that God is bound in justice to give equal light to all men. The world is not such a dead level as this. Some persons or peoples must be more fitted than others to receive the revelation—or to discover the truth—which needs next to be known at a given time. Such fitness will not of necessity imply a higher degree of *general* moral excellence. The difference may be made by some special delicacy of feeling, grasp of mind, or force of will, according to its nature. The Jews, for instance, are described as bad receivers, because they were a stiff-necked people, and slow to learn; but they must also have been good receivers, because they were a stiff-necked people, and slow to forget. So too

we can see special qualities (apart from any general moral excellence) which may at various times have fitted the Greeks, the Romans, or the English to take the part they plainly have taken in the development of human thought on things divine.

It is therefore not unlikely that we may find in history some revelation or series of revelations so much nearer than others to the main line of development, that all the rest may be treated from some points of view as subordinate or imperfect growths. Such a revelation is likely to contain purer truth and to give a deeper insight than others; but its position in history is its distinctive character, and makes it more illuminative of others than illuminated by them. Such central revelation, if such there be, is what we mean by a special revelation.

It may be answered here that a central revelation is not what is usually meant by a special revelation. I am not so sure of that. If we do not find the distinctive character of the latter in some miraculous method of communication—which is a curious way of preferring the earthen vessel to the treasure contained in it—we must look to the character of the message itself. But if all revelation is God's purposed message, as it must be on any theistic theory, a revelation which contains so much truth, or truth in such purity as to illuminate all the rest, must be more visibly than any of them his purposed message, and therefore a special revelation in the common meaning of the phrase. The historical question of miracles accompanying it would not come up till later; and a Gifford Lecturer is not concerned with it.

Here we are then face to face at last with the central

question of our whole investigation. If hopes of a special revelation are not unlawful, how far can we go towards giving them a definite form? Such a revelation must no doubt be neither more nor less than what God shall please to give us; but can we form beforehand any idea of what he may or may not please to give? I believe we can. But we shall need reverence as well as wisdom if we are to wade far into the doings of the Most High. We must not forget the old warning,[1] he is above, and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few. There is no sadder sight in philosophy than the rashness with which men have taken for granted that God *must* do this or that. Yet we are not without light, for even the knowledge that there is a mystery is some knowledge; and we are free to find its limits. Speaking as here I do speak, under full sense of the reverence and caution that is needed by one who takes upon him to speak on so high and arduous a question, I believe that while many things must be left in doubt, some things can be laid down for certain, and others as more or less likely. One thing, and only one, we can safely say God *must* do: he must act according to his own nature. Given what we know of him, we may safely start from the position that what comes from him cannot be unworthy of him. Like himself, it must be rational and moral; and since the gift of a special revelation would itself be a clinching proof of his goodness, it must also plainly shew that goodness. Whether an alleged revelation fulfils these conditions is a question of which we are not incompetent judges.

[1] Eccles. v 2.

In the first place, a special revelation will certainly be serious. It will have a purpose, and that a moral purpose. It will not be idle spirit-rapping and table-turning and stories of ghosts which have no moral importance. If, indeed, the ghosts had a serious and otherwise credible story which gave us new help towards right living, we might consider their plea more fully; but this is just what they never seem to have. So far as we can make sense of their messages and compare them with known facts, we find that what is new in them is not true, and what is true is not new. Most of these tales may be set aside at once, though some will remain for further consideration, like the story of Jesus of Nazareth, where the meaning is serious enough, and the evidence *prima facie* considerable. Whether it finally proves true or false, no fair-minded man will summarily class it with stories whose want of divine authority is only too evident from their want of common sense.

In particular, we may safely say that a divine revelation will be practical. Its purpose is *ex hypothesi* to help men, not to minister to curiosity. Its concern is with this life: of another it will only speak by way of help for this. Thus we can hardly recognize a divine revelation in Mahomet's elaborate descriptions of a sensual Paradise, or in Swedenborg's accounts of the planets. The former would be less liable to objection if we might take them allegorically; but their language would seem too realistic, and the Muslim commentators have always understood them literally. They exclude the allegorical as definitely as the Apocalypse excludes the literal meaning. Speaking generally,

though we are not competent to lay down very closely the limits of that which may be morally helpful, an alleged revelation which as a whole clearly falls outside them cannot be divine. One that is divine will have a side of reticence as well as one of revelation, and may be almost as clearly marked by what it does not contain as by what it does. Thus there is an argument in the lines on the resurrection of Lazarus—

> Behold a man raised up by Christ;
> The rest remaineth unrevealed:
> He told it not, or something sealed
> The lips of that Evangelist.

Similarly, such a revelation will directly concern our highest interests, or others incidentally and by way of consequence. This is the point which Professor Bruce worked out so admirably at Glasgow with regard to omens and divination; and in his steps we must follow for a while. The art, then, of divination starts fairly enough. If there are gods, we may presume that they care for men; and if they care for men, they will not refuse to give them signs of their will. But then come two great mistakes which vitiate everything. First, the signs were expected and supposed to be given on outward and secondary matters, such as the Stoics called *ἀδιάφορα*. Thus the question may be, "Will this enterprise be a success? Shall I marry that woman? Will somebody have good luck?" So Epictetus had the dilemma, though he did not quite put it together, that it is impious to ask whether we ought to do our duty, for no sign can make that clearer than it is already; and demoralizing to ask what will be the worldly consequences

of doing it. The other mistake was in looking to unusual events for signs, as if the common order of the world was useless for the purpose. They did not even choose for their signs moral facts to be interpreted by moral insight, but physical things like the cry of a bird or the state of a victim's entrails, which had to be deciphered by technical skill. The root of the mischief was the belief in fortune instead of character as the supreme good, and consequent unhealthy curiosity about the future. The distrust of the moral order implied in this kind of divination hindered true religion by the low ideals it encouraged, and true knowledge by its arbitrary methods and contempt of common things. It was at once dishonouring to the gods and debasing to their worshippers.

So far as there is a true art of divination, it can only be a moral divination, an inverse of, By their fruits ye shall know them ; and sometimes that will go a long way. The second Isaiah, for instance, might very well foresee the fall of Babylon without any miraculous help. And if Jesus of Nazareth foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, he said no more than a pure and thoughtful mind might have gathered from the signs of the times—that the savage fanaticism of the Jews would soon bring the Romans to take away their place and nation. So far as this prediction goes, there is no need on any theory to put the discourse after the event, as whole schools of commentators do. Caution against the miraculous need not go the length of blinding us to the possibilities of reasonable foresight.

The next thing we can say for certain of a revelation

is that its character will be moral and rational. It will meet the moral and rational needs of serious men, and from the first commend itself to some of them as doing so. Only to some, for we cannot expect it to secure immediate and general acceptance. The more truly it answers the noblest aspirations of the time, the more sharply it will contradict the baser thoughts of common men. If a new thought is needed in the world, it cannot but run counter to the shallow popular religion of the time—"that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." The natural man will take fright; and those that run after a novelty are likely to drop it before long. Better men will defend the religion they have, because they see the truth contained in it, and do not know how to sift out the error. The most open-minded men are not always the clearest headed, and may not see how to reconcile the new truth with the old. Hence a revelation cannot fail to be a sword of division, sharpened by the aggressiveness of men who have the world against them. Still, it ought to win followers among the best men of the time, and sometimes to extort from its worst enemies such praise as men can give while still remaining enemies. Thus Christianity would have a real difficulty to explain if it could not set Origen and Athanasius against Plotinus and Julian, or in our own time Tait and Clerk Maxwell against Huxley and Tyndall.

Again, if we are right in supposing that a revelation will be moral and practical, aiming rather at helping us to right living than at satisfying our curiosity, we cannot take for granted that it will give us a full solution of our intellectual difficulties. We are like

children when compared with beings we might imagine; and there are many things a child cannot understand, many he does not need to understand, and some that might do him harm if he came to know them before his time. Such or such-like the case must be with us. A revelation is likely enough to make some difficulties worse, or even to disclose new and greater difficulties, as new light commonly does. Even science never gives a final explanation of an observed fact: all that it can do is to group that fact with others under a wider law, which is a deeper mystery. We cannot expect revelation to do more than this: though its general effect, like that of science, ought to be intellectually clearing. On practical questions, however, of aims and motives it might possibly speak a final word. Supposing, for example, it were to shew us that God is good in spite of any appearances there may be to the contrary, this would be a final word; for it would give us a motive covering the whole of life, a motive which no imaginable development of a finite being could render obsolete.

LECTURE VI.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

II.

FURTHERMORE, a revelation will look forward, because it is a process of education. On the divine side it is a teaching, on the human side a learning, of things divine; and a process, because teaching is a process. And since things divine must affect the whole of life, the process of teaching broadens out into a process of education for the man, the nation, or the race receiving the revelation. Now there is but one method in all sound education—to make the learner verify things by his own experience as fast as he is able to do it. In the lowest stage of theory facts are given, to be taken on trust, and commands are issued, to be obeyed in confidence that our parents know best. But in practice we never come down to blind trust. A very small child can see for himself—and a wise teacher encourages him to see for himself—that some of the facts are true, and that some of the commands are given him for his good; and henceforth trust and verification go together. The very object of education is that the learner should return upon the facts and the commands that were given

him, and see for himself how far they were rightly given. The disciple is not perfect till he is as his master. At every step the teacher looks forward to this independent verification, and shapes all his work with a view to it.

This is not only the method of all good teachers, but the only possible way of dealing with the learner as a rational creature. If therefore God is the teacher, this is the way we must expect him to follow. If he gives facts or issues commands, he does it in the intention that we should verify them by experience. Even the child can verify some things, and his elders can verify more, though we must not be surprised if some difficulties remain insoluble, for there must be elements of mystery, and therefore room for faith, in an uncompleted evolution. Hence we must expect revelation to move, like other teaching, from the lower to the higher, from the easier to the harder, from the simpler to the more complex, as men are able to bear it. But at every step it must look forward, not only to the next, but to the whole development which is to follow. Its earliest forms may be—must be—sensuous and rude, to be understanded of sensuous and rude men; but they must look forward to better things, and place no needless hindrance in their way. For instance, the reference to the deliverance from Egypt in the First Commandment may not be so sublime as I am the Absolute, or the Unconditioned; but anyone can see that it is much more practical teaching.

A revelation must look forward, it may rest on historic facts of the past, and may even be said to consist of such facts, though in that case it will more

properly consist in the gradual unfolding of their meaning in successive ages. Such meaning is infinite; for if the universe is an organic whole, as on any rational theory it must be, the complete understanding of the smallest fact of history in all its bearings must be the unravelling of the last mysteries of earth and heaven. And if the alleged facts are really the central facts of history, as those of a central or special revelation ought to be, all other historical facts will fall into order round these, so that the truth of the revelation will be the natural key, not only to the past which went before it, but to the future which has followed it. Thus, if Islam were in question, we should have to ask not only how far the earlier history of the world converged on Mahomet's mission, but how far the truth of that mission throws light on the developments of later ages. How far, for instance, has Islam been the inspiration of all that is highest in men; and how far does it now seem tending to gather to itself their noblest hopes and stamp them with the mark of Mahomet?

If an alleged revelation professes to rest on historical facts and to be made through them, there seems to be nothing of itself unreasonable in a further declaration that its full benefits cannot at present be given to others than believers in those facts. Some will raise here an outcry about dogma; but I think with very little reason. The objectors are partly of opinion that the facts are false, they partly agree with Lessing that eternal truth cannot depend on facts of time, and they partly resent the demand for belief in such facts as a piece of religious tyranny. Very commonly these three

distinct arguments lie confusedly together, like the chaos of Anaxagoras, except that mind does not come and set them in order. Now the facts may, of course, be false, but anyone so persuaded is bound either to argue this question first or to set it aside entirely when he comes to the others, for they cannot be rationally discussed without, provisionally at least, supposing the facts to be true. Now it may be granted that eternal truth cannot depend on facts of time; but why should it not be manifested by such facts? How else can it be manifested? Were God to speak to our hearts, he must do so at such a date; if he spoke through the order of nature, we could say when the message reached us; and even if he spoke straight from heaven, that too would be a fact of time, and our understanding of it would be conditioned by other such facts. If we cannot know things eternal by things of time, we cannot know them at all. As regards the third objection, it must be allowed that the historical facts of an alleged revelation do limit the freedom of thought; but they limit it only in the same sense as other facts limit it. The fact of the Resurrection limits thought in exactly the same sense as the fact of Cæsar's assassination, or the fact that water boils at 212 degrees, and in no other sense. Assuming all three facts true, as we are doing for the moment, all that follows is that they must be treated as true by all thought which in any way touches them. If objection be further made, as it often is, that a church has no right to make a test of historical facts, the answer is simple. If men are at liberty to form associations as they think fit for the promotion of

particular opinions on politics, history, or philosophy, there cannot well be anything wrong *per se* in such associations as are formed by the adherents of the historical religions for the promotion of such opinions as follow from the truth of their alleged historical facts. And the right to associate for that purpose carries the right to exclude any who do not believe such facts. A demand to have them made an open question is a demand for the suppression of the society as constituted for its present purpose. If it is to be tolerated at all, it must not be refused the elementary rights of other societies.[1]

But I am afraid most of these objectors do not even know what is meant by a dogma. An alleged historical fact may be false; but it cannot be a dogma, unless we are using the word in a generally abusive way. An interpretation put on it by some supposed authority may be a dogma; and as interpretations vary in cogency, so will dogmas. Some will have a very flimsy connexion with the alleged facts, while others are linked on to them by reasoning which a man in his right mind can hardly dispute. But however that may be, historical religions are not in the same sense limited by the interpretations or dogmas of a particular period as by their fundamental facts. Historical facts are

[1] In the words of a writer who cannot be suspected of any prejudice in favour of Christianity: "When a religion is proclaimed to have been revealed under given circumstances of time and place, it cannot allow its historical tradition to be indefinitely vaporized (he is speaking of the Gnostics) without ceasing to exist. All the religions of this type, whether aggressively intolerant or not, have had to bind themselves by a creed of more or less precision into a Church of more or less exclusiveness." —Whittaker, *Neoplatonists*, 222.

given once for all, but interpretations belong to an uncompleted evolution; and some distinction must be made between religions which declare alleged facts of history, and those which try to stereotype the dogmas of a particular period. The one group may be mistaken, the other must be false.

Revelation must in any case have this forward look. If we take it first on the divine side as a gift of truth to men, each part of it must contribute to the whole, and have an organic relation to parts given before and after it. The vast diversity of mankind makes it likely that revelation will be given πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως, in divers parts and by divers methods as men are able to receive it; but it will not be given in parts unrelated to each other. If there is a divine purpose anywhere, it must run through the whole, and make it a solid unity. Thus, if such a revelation be recorded in the Bible, we have no right to work on isolated texts without reasonable regard to the drift and meaning of the whole. This indeed is the way most of the worst mistakes are made. Athanasius complained of the Arians that they built a system on the metaphor of *sonship* without regard to other statements of Scripture; and later systems have been built as recklessly on other metaphors, like those of *ransom* or *body*. Be the document what it may, fragmentary interpretations cannot be right. It is childish, for instance, to quote, Being crafty, I caught you with guile,[1] in proof that St. Paul told lies whenever he found it convenient; or to discover a repudiation of natural duty in, Go and sell that

[1] 2 Cor. xii 16.

thou hast,[1] or to gather from, No sign shall be given,[2] the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth disowned the power of working signs. All these positions have been recently defended by men of some notoriety, and they are all about as accurate as the rabbinic quotation, Thou shalt follow a multitude.[3] Or again, if we take the revelation on its human side as an evolution of knowledge, the forward look is implied in the conception of evolution as the explicit development at every stage of something that was implicit at the last. If we cannot expect to foresee the precise course of the development, the connexion of successive steps will often be very plain to those who can look back on them.

There is another consideration bearing on this forward look. A revelation must consist largely—we need not ask just now how largely—of moral truth; and moral truth is in essence universal. The nature of God and the principles of duty concern all men equally. If, then, moral truth is reached at a given time by one nation only, that nation must be in some way specially fitted to receive the revelation or make the discovery; but others will reach it likewise when they are fit to receive it from the first. This means that a true revelation cannot be particular, except so far as universal truth may need to be given in local or temporary forms. Magical rites may be a secret tradition, and the worship

[1] Mt. xix 21 : and this in defiance of the fact that he had just quoted (ver. 19) the Fifth Commandment.

[2] Mk. viii 12.

[3] Exod. xxiii 2. As the negative comes first in Hebrew, it may conveniently be stopped off. It is really surprising that some of these critics have not quoted, There is no God.

of a limited god may be limited; but the revelation or discovery of one God through facts of history, of science, or of human nature, must be as universal as the facts themselves. If God speaks in them, he speaks to all who know them; and if men discover him through them, the discovery is free to all who can verify it for themselves. In other words, a true revelation may be full of adaptations to the needs of its first receivers; but it must contain also a universal element suited to the needs of all men in all ages, so that the adaptations cannot be such as could permanently bar any future advance. It cannot impose any permanent limit, but must be capable of passing into something higher. If it has any laws of the Medes and Persians which alter not, they must be such as never will need to be altered.

To give an example. Islam will not stand this test. It is universal enough in the sense of receiving all comers and admitting all its converts to all its privileges without reserve; nor can we deny that it lifts them to a pretty high level, at all events far above the level of African or Indian idol-worships. The universal element is there too, in a doctrine of God which has often stirred men of sundry nations to splendid works of courage, of justice, and of charity. So far well; unfortunately, Mahomet often appealed to lower passions, as notably in his laws of war and in his pictures of paradise. Worse than this, he has placed in the Koran laws which the moral sense of men has outgrown, like those regulating the position of women; and laws which make it impossible for Muslims to govern other people with

justice, like that which commands the rejection of Christian evidence against a true believer. Worst of all, he put these laws beyond reform by a doctrine of verbal inspiration which is not merely a common belief about the Koran, but a principal part of its direct teaching. Thus he effectually barred all advance to a higher level. It cannot be reached from Islam, but only by entirely renouncing Mahomet.

The case of Judaism is for a certain distance the same. We find a similar welcome to proselytes and a still higher doctrine of God; but here again we find statutes which were not good, and laws which make Judaism unfit to be a permanent or universal religion. So far it stands on the same footing as Islam. The difference is partly that the Jewish conception of God as perfect implies, and was seen to imply,[1] the promise of a better covenant in the future, for an imperfect covenant could not be the last gift of a perfectly good God; partly that the Messianic hope required every good Jew to hold his religion subject to such reforms as the Messiah might please to make. The Pharisees of course overlooked both these points; but the real meaning of Judaism was rightly given by the baptism of John.

The case of Christianity differs again. As in Judaism, we have alleged facts, and principles of conduct deduced from them. If God brought us out of Egypt, or if he gave his Son to die for us, what manner of men ought we to be? But while Judaism has a whole code of law, the Gospel makes no outward acts unconditionally

[1] Jer. xxxi 31–34.

binding but the two sacraments ordained of Christ himself. All further institutions and observances are ordained of men, and may for good cause be changed by men without disloyalty to Christ. Some of these, like the observance of Sunday or the existence of a ministry, rest on needs of human nature that will not pass away till men are very different from what they are. Still, even these are not of the essence of the Gospel. The Christian ministry is no more than a partial delegation of the universal priesthood, though it has always been found necessary for the sake of decency and order. The idealism even of the old prophets looked forward to a time when any such delegation shall be needless: and such is also the hope of Christians.[1] Those then who maintain that Christianity is outgrown or likely to be outgrown will have to shew either that the Christian facts have turned out false, or that we see our way to a better morality than that of Christ, or that the two sacraments are in their proper use obstructions to a higher life. Any of these arguments will be much to the purpose; but nothing is gained by pointing out the historical shortcomings of an uncompleted evolution without shewing that such shortcomings are necessary consequences of its essential principles.

But though a revelation must look forward, we cannot expect it to make itself an anachronism and practically useless by anticipating the reason and morality of a

[1] Jer. xxxi 33, 34, quoted Heb. viii 11, alluded to Apoc. xxi 3 and similar passages, and confirmed by such as 1 John iii 2, which speak of direct vision. Apoc. xxi 22 is also significant.

distant future. Even if God were to speak straight from heaven, he must still speak, as the rabbis say, in the language of men. He cannot give more than men are able to receive. Yet many persons, professed believers too in evolution, seem quite ready to argue that nothing can possibly be divine unless it is precisely on a level with our present standard of thought and morality. But this is asking too much. A revelation must approve itself to conscience, and is therefore limited by the growth of conscience. It will be enough if an alleged revelation reaches the highest standard of its own time, and from that level points upward and not downward, so as to be a help and not a hindrance to a further advance. So much we may expect; but we cannot safely require more.

Perhaps we may further agree that a revelation cannot be true unless it is rational and moral, for this can hardly be denied unless we give up the final rationality of the universe. Mr. Kidd no doubt defends religion while holding it contrary to reason; but a position of this kind reached by reason is unintelligible till we find that the reason he contrasts with religion is nothing more than a sense of present interest—which is an unusual meaning for the word. But there are others, confused thinkers who seem to take the unknown for the unreasonable, and fancy they do honour to God by making revelation the arbitrary declaration of his will and nothing more, so that his nature remains unknown, and infinite reason and justice may for aught we know be the reverse of all that we mean by reason and justice. This was supposed to be Mansel's position;

and it certainly explained the appearances of unreason and injustice which have been a trial to serious thinkers in all ages. But it was only one more sample of the realistic dualism which divorces appearance from reality, and denies our competence to reach the truth of anything beyond our own perceptions. The defeat of this attempt to base religion on agnosticism was the crisis of religious thought in England in the nineteenth century. In one direction the controversy laid open the fundamental scepticism of Tractarianism and such-like religions of church authority, and in another the human element in revelation which it brought to the front was fatal to forensic theories of the atonement and mechanical theories of inspiration, while its reflex action opened out a new phase of essentially agnostic thought in Mansel's disciple, Herbert Spencer. However, no religion on the face of the earth has been able to keep its historical development uninfluenced by the persistent belief of the natural man, that devotion ought to contain, not only the element of incompleteness and mystery inherent in all human thought, but also an element of unreason. I fear we shall long have with us—at least in England —the people who seem to measure heavenliness of mind by appetite for silliness.

To take another illustration. So far as Islam claims to be a special revelation, it is condemned at once by its low morality. In saying this I do not forget that Islam sets a higher standard than most religions, and has often won its victories by undeniable moral superiority, both in its short heroic age and in later revivals. It was indeed the sword of God which smote both Rome and

Persia on the Yermouk and at Cadesiya, the sword of God before which not a man could stand from India to Spain; and in the power of truth and right Saladin scattered at Hattin the faithless chivalry of Latin Europe. There was an age when Turkish justice was more tolerable than Christian, and a day of shame when Christendom cowered before the just rebuke of Islam at Varna. Nevertheless I should rank the Koran morally far below Deuteronomy. Some may think differently; but hardly anyone will venture to put it near the level of the New Testament. And that is enough. A standard which is not the highest may still be the highest reached as yet: but the Koran is not so much as this. When it sets aside the New Testament it replaces it not with something better, but with something worse. Allah is merciful forsooth, and saw that Jesus had asked too much of men, and not told them enough about Paradise. Now this is one of the things which a true revelation cannot do. It cannot command us, as the Koran does, to turn downward from a higher standard of morality to a lower.

Similarly the Montanist oracles of the Paraclete. They presume the truth of Christianity: so for the moment we must do likewise. Here then a special revelation is presented to us as the fulfilment of the Gospel, even as the Gospel was the fulfilment of the Law. Well, what is the outcome of this higher revelation? A few fasts, a mechanical doctrine of inspiration, a stricter penance, and a prohibition of second marriage. This last, by the way, is no completion of Christ's teaching, but a flat contradiction of his

answer to the Sadducees. However, let that pass. Taking the oracles on their own shewing, are we not moving on a lower plane than when we listened to the lofty teaching of the Man of Nazareth? And is not this decisive? Be the Gospel true or false, it bars every claim to special revelation that has been made in later times, except for those in whose opinion some such revelation is morally higher than that of Christ.

Some of these claims are further barred by want of consistency. Take the modern revelations of the Church of Rome. Discounting all that can be explained by natural causes, let us imagine something remaining. Now these revelations profess to be Christian, and are therefore bound to be consistent with Christ's teaching. In themselves possibly some of them are: but logically they are inseparable from a system whose working parts cannot be reconciled to Christ's teaching without a further non-rational and historically untenable claim to determine by authority the meaning of that teaching. That is to say, Christ's teaching and these later revelations cannot both be divine. One or both must be false, and those who do not reject both must choose between them. As Bessarion might have said, these new revelations make us doubt of the old.

It is of the claim to reveal something new that I am speaking, for in another sense Islam (for example) may have been, or rather must have been, a message from heaven. Whatever else it may contain, the moving force of its first heroic efforts was that thrilling and inspiring sense of God's reality and righteousness which

the idol-worshippers of Eastern Christendom had lost. It might mean Paradise before and hell behind; but none the less it also meant the old Hebrew battle-cry, Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and this was the faith in which Islam sent forth its armies on their wonderful career of victory. Some of us may smile at faith of that sort; but such faith has been a mighty force in history, and if there is a God at all his message and his power it must be.

So too of other movements. History seems to shew that untruth pure and simple seldom lasts long. So when we come to something that does last we may expect to find in it some truth, and therefore some divine message. It may be very far from pure truth, for a small amount of living truth will sometimes float for a long time a great amount of untruth. Some will recognize the message more or less truly when it comes, and many more will see something of its meaning when they look back on it in the light of history. And that message must itself be a declaration of truth, whether it be a revelation of new truth or a recall to old truth now forgotten.

But here we shall need some caution to avoid making false distinctions. In common language, revelation is limited to moral truth, and discovery to physical truth; and as there is a real difference between moral and physical truth, though on any theistic theory they agree in being the thoughts of God, we get a valid distinction of subject-matter. Similarly we say that God may reveal new truth, or man discover it, but that God can only recall as to old truth, and man can only recover

what he has forgotten; and this again is a valid distinction. But there is no such difference of process as there is of subject-matter. Whether old or new truth be in question, we have no reason to suppose that God will communicate them by entirely different methods; and we know that man goes to work in much the same way to find out either. But moreover, if we take our Theism seriously, revelation and discovery must be the same process viewed from different standpoints. If we speak of revelation, we say that God gives knowledge of his thoughts; but we imply that man receives it—or misses it by his own fault. If we call the process discovery, we say that man finds out what must be thoughts of God; but we imply that God has so disposed both him and them that he is able to find them out. In either case we have the same two facts—that God has ordered things in a certain way, and that man has recognized this order in them. There may be a difference in God's method of communication, but in both cases God reveals and a difference in the facts observed by man, but in both cases man discovers. The divine action is not more real in the one case, or the human in the other. Revelation or discovery is neither in God's giving nor in man's receiving, but in the two together. It is neither in God's truth without, nor in God's image within, but in the meeting of the two. It comes to pass whenever God's image within recognizes God's truth without. No matter so far about the kind of truth. Be it physical or mental or spiritual: in all cases revelation and discovery go together. The divine and the human are always both implied; and we can no more have the one

without the other than we can have the north without the south, or a circle without a centre.

In common language, revelation refers to religious truth, discovery to physical truth; and the difference of words corresponds to another real difference of meaning. Discovery suggests the uncovering of a particular thing; revelation is the removal of a vail which more generally obstructs our sight. In fact, we have seen that the moral failings which generally hinder our grasp of moral truth are also the chief causes of the intellectual failings which specially hinder our discovery of scientific or historical truth. A third word used in the New Testament, especially by St. Paul, gives us an interesting side view of the whole process. The word *manifestation* presents truth neither as revealed by God nor as discovered by man, but as shining out by its own light, and gradually shining through the vail till it becomes distinct. There is a revelation when the curtains are drawn back to let in the sunshine, a manifestation when the light of the dawn shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Is there not a development here? Does not the word well describe the gradual way in which new truth is borne in on men and on mankind? First it is dimly seen, or only seen in part, or seen in confused relations; gradually the clouds clear off and the surroundings come out in their true perspective. First we have our doubts, then fightings within, and at last unhesitating certainty. First one man sees his way, then another, and at last there is a more or less general agreement, and the old ideas of science or morality become obsolete. This duelling (I mean in England)

authority would always have against it an immense mass of opinion shaped by other forces than the love of truth, so that it could only make way gradually, and through formidable conflicts.

But to what faculties will it appeal? From experience we judge that the world's order is rational and moral; and from experience we must judge whether an alleged revelation is rational and moral: and the same faculties which give us the one experience will also give us the other. I say experience rather than knowledge, because a purely theoretical knowledge, if such were possible, would have no moral value. We can get no real and effective knowledge even of this world except by acting on what we know already. We cannot expect to solve the harder problems till we have fairly worked out the easier. A bad son is not likely to be a good father, and the man who has not learned to obey is unfit to command. The range of needful faculties is the range of human nature. We must have feeling to suggest a meaning for what passes before us, intellect to define and verify that meaning, and will to work it out in the experience of life. By this process we come to know what we know of Nature and ourselves, and by this process must we come to know what we can know of revelation. It must speak to the whole man.

The process then of revelation is fairly clear. If God is a Person, we must get our knowledge of him in much the same way as we get our knowledge of men. We see their outward forms, but we no more see *them* than we see God. Yet we see their actions, and if we care to reason on them we can draw conclusions. Then, as

we ponder lovingly the works and words of those we love, we see more and more of their meaning: and sometimes again come unbidden thoughts, we know not whence or how, to give us further insight. So also must it be with the knowledge of God. If he dwells in the light whereunto no man can approach, he is not for that reason harder to know than the friend of our life behind the wall of personality that keeps us in our awful isolation from each other. Barrier for barrier, we have no reason to suppose that one is harder than the other for love to overleap. In either case and equally the eyes of sense will fail, for it is not simply with our outward eye that we have knowledge of our fellow-men; but if the arms of faith stretch outward to the living persons of our unseen friends, why should they not stretch outward also to the living Person of the unseen Lord whose image we bear? We see what must be his actions all around us; and if we are willing to reason on them we can draw conclusions, even as we draw conclusions from the actions of a friend whom possibly our eyes have never seen. Then, if we ponder well his works as works of one we love, we ought to see more and more of their meaning; and some there are who tell us that so they do. Nor is there anything incredible or even unlikely in what they further tell us, that sometimes unbidden thoughts come—whence they think they know, but not how—which give them further insight.

Let us pause for awhile on these unbidden thoughts. We cannot probe them to the bottom, and we shall not need to probe them very deep. Indeed it may be that the origin of human thought is a subject full of danger

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except for those to whom all things are pure. There is no subject where fools are more ready to rush in, no subject more encumbered with legends and uncertain stories, and perplexed with idle marvels and unhealthy dreamings. The exact limits of the *Terra incognita* may be hard to fix; but there is no great difficulty in roughly settling them. In whatever way a given train of thought arises, whether from a conscious impression or not, when it is once begun, the will has a good deal of selective power to continue it or turn it aside, or to break it off entirely. In the main it seems linked together by imperfectly understood laws of association, as if one thought or some feature of it suggested the next; so that here again the will has a good deal of power to recover lost thoughts by retracing their associations, or to obtain new thoughts of any sort we desire by cultivating thoughts likely to be associated with them, and therefore to suggest them to us. The *φρόνημα* of a man—the selection of thoughts he cultivates—is the most characteristic product of his will.

The connexion of thoughts is often very clear; and even the romance of dreams frequently has an evident and prosaic origin. The sound of a servant's knock is magnified into the noise of battle; and the vision of a distant light across a furrowed field was caused by a ribbed shading on the gas-light which I could hardly see when awake. Sometimes, however, the connexions are distant or obscure. Why should I wake up with a dream of a bit of Brazilian history I picked up years before at school, and have never seen since? Why

should we dream of monsters that never lived on land or sea, or why should the visions that float before us even in our waking hours change from one face to another like dissolving views?

Clearly the ultimate analysis of these things is beyond our present powers. We know little more than the surface waters of the great deep of human nature. Our sight is dull, our sounding lines are short, and all below is mystery. Yet our nature does not seem like the coral reefs, where the surface layer only is living growth, and all below is dead. On the contrary, the subconscious deep would seem as full of life and purpose as the conscious surface. Hartmann was a true seer when he preached the supreme wisdom of the unconscious, though he mistook it for unconscious wisdom of the Supreme, and allowed a juggle of words to hide the natural inference, that what is absurdly called unconscious purpose in ourselves must express the conscious purpose of Another.

It may be that the separating wall of personality goes sheer and solid to the bottom; but all the evidence tends to shew that there is no essential difference between the conscious and the subconscious regions, and that the latter is as open as the former to influences from outside. Sensation as a whole would seem to be continuous like the spectrum, where there are invisible waves of the same nature as the visible, so that while they do not reach the eye as light, they shew themselves in chemical and other effects. Similarly with sound. Some of our impressions seem to lie wholly on the surface, and if they go lower we are not conscious of it.

Others which also lie on the surface plainly dip below it. We feel; but we know that we feel more than we know. We cannot analyse the beauty of the flower in the crannied wall, or grasp the mystery of the great sea that rolleth evermore, fit emblem of the world of deeper mystery within us. A third class of impressions would seem, as it were, to strike the surface and dip below it to be lost for awhile and come up again later, like a lost clue or a forgotten name. They have been stored up meanwhile — perhaps not idle — in the subconscious region, and come up as if they had originally struck there; but we know them again because we have seen them before.

Now, may there not be a fourth class of impressions which strike first on the subconscious region, and work there for a time before their effects come to the surface? They will come up like the last class, except that we shall not recognize them, because we have not seen them before. If impressions from outside reach us through the senses, they will not necessarily touch the senses between the limits where consciousness begins and ends. We know that the waves of light and sound are as real below the limits of sight and hearing as above them; and might be perceived by keener senses than ours, or possibly in some rare cases by our own. If Elisha really heard the words the king spake in his bedchamber, such experience would be unusual, if not unique; but we could not summarily declare the story contrary to natural law. If evidence of the fact were brought, we should have to examine it fairly. If our senses are more delicate or wider in range than the recording conscious-

ness, we can see how mind may have its wireless telegraphy as well as matter.

Though on the surface of our nature we are sharply separated individuals, there is evidence of mysterious connexions below the reach of consciousness. The separating wall of personality seems built on arches. If we are members of each other in our physical life and in our social relations, why not in mind and spirit also? It may be, as I have heard Bishop Westcott argue,[1] that the unbidden thoughts of goodness which come to us, we know not whence or how, are due to the subconscious influence (he said the prayers) of absent friends. Such a theory is of course unproved; but can it be disproved? Does it require a breach of any known natural law? If so, let the breach be shewn: if not, let it be admitted as a possibility. If true, it shews how prayer may be a real force in the world without our seeing it. Perhaps its possibility will be most readily allowed by those who are most impressed by the deepening mystery of Nature disclosed by science in these last few years: and surely there are more things in heaven and earth than science has ever dreamed of yet.

But, especially if the possibility of human suggestion in the subconscious region be admitted, we can hardly deny the possibility of divine suggestion. In one sense, no doubt, every true thought must be of divine suggestion; for if there is a God not lower than the beasts, we need no Gospel to tell us that there is such a thing as providence,—which in this case means that the order of things has been so arranged and guided as to suggest

[1] The evening of my own ordination, 20th December 1891.

such true thought. This indirect suggestion, if I may guard my words with a condition, may perhaps be a sufficient account of the element of divine suggestion which is implied in revelation, though religious experience may indicate occasional suggestion of a more direct sort, so that we shall do well to leave the question open.

The condition without which indirect suggestion would by itself be no account of the matter at all is this. What comes to us as a suggestion through natural causes must be as purposed a message of God, and may in some cases be as certainly recognized for such a message, as if he spoke it from the burning bush. The certainty of the message, and of its meaning, may flash out at once, or it may grow upon us as we ponder it. The suggestion itself may be a new fact, a fresh touch of feeling, or a strengthened purpose. By the opening of our eyes, the warming of our hearts, or the bracing of our will we know that the suggestion which came to us through natural channels was divine. On this condition only will there be even a possibility of accounting fully for the divine element in revelation without a more direct divine suggestion.

Such more direct suggestion, if such were given, would not of necessity be consciously received. It might work for a while in the subconscious region like its human parallel, and contribute in the same way to conscious results. As regards the recognition and verification of a divine element in these results, there is no reason for making an exception to the rule that things divine are known by their rationality and goodness, or at any rate

by their necessary connexion with something already so approved to be divine. The voice that bids us calm that evil passion or give up that hatred is divine, come it whence or how it may; and so is the conviction which grows on us, that evil shall not for ever prosper; and we know them to be divine by their rationality and goodness. If the pondered certainty of the prophet is more vivid than the belief of common men, it is not necessarily different in kind.

Any divine suggestion must of course be consistent with infinite wisdom and goodness, and generally connected with the entire plan of revelation, though we cannot expect always to see the precise nature of the connexion. But whether it be sometimes direct or always indirect, the only other limit we can fix for it beforehand is that it cannot give more than the subject of it is able to receive. But we cannot say beforehand how deeply a man may be enabled to see into the secret of the world, or how completely a willing heart may be brought into sympathy with the order of things. If the possibility of divine suggestion be admitted in any form—and it can hardly be denied to a personal God—we cannot rule out *in limine* the claims of prophets to bear special messages, or even the supreme claim ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth, to be God's perfect representative. If evidence be offered for such claims, we are not entitled to disregard it.

LECTURE VII.

INSPIRATION, PROPHECY, MIRACLE.

This brings us to the question of inspiration. The word has been connected with so many wild theories in past ages that it is now in some disgrace; and at first sight it may seem related rather to miraculous revelations than to Natural Theology. Yet it stands for a necessary part even of this. If there is any sort of revelation there must be some sort of inspiration, for the two words imply the same thing viewed from different standpoints. Revelation refers the knowledge given to the God who gives it, while inspiration takes it from the side of the man who receives it. Inspiration differs from discovery, which also views the knowledge from the human side, in having to do not with the man's reception of it, but with his preparation for receiving it. Now this preparation cannot be limited to any supposed divine *afflatus* at the time of speaking or writing. Such *afflatus*, whatever it be, comes in any case to a man of given character and environment; and if it is not pure magic it will be conditioned by these, and the idea of inspiration must take in the shaping of his character and of his whole environment.

But now, if even physical truth cannot be received

without more or less preparation of diligent study, we can hardly doubt that some measure of purity and truthfulness will be needed for the recognition of divine truth, however it be presented. Yet so strong is the tendency of the natural man to find religion in unreason, that the followers even of the higher religions have commonly enough turned inspiration into a piece of magic, to the grievous injury of the rationality which must in any case be a principal feature of all God's dealings with men. This is the error of all theories which make prophecy ecstatic, as in the Delphic oracle, or inspiration mechanical, as in the Koran. There are two objections to all theories of this kind. In the first place, though God constantly uses men to work out purposes of which they have no conception, he cannot be supposed to use them as these theories imply —simply as live tools and not as moral beings. For us to use them so is confessedly immoral; indeed, the wrong of slavery or of fornication is just this, that we so use each other without forming true personal relations. And what is wrong for us is no more made right for God than for any tyrant by his power. Moreover, for the second objection, spiritual truth is not like a message we might learn by heart and deliver correctly without understanding it. Some such idea underlies the famous question, If the words are not inspired, what is? Words have no such fixed value as a mathematical symbol, which always means the same thing to all men who are able to use it. They cannot be more than signs of a message behind them; and if that message is meant to convey anything else than mathematical

theorems, we cannot receive it as a magical formula, but must more or less digest it and make it a part of ourselves. And this we cannot do without some sort of moral preparation of the whole man. Mere intellect attacking moral questions will fare no better than common sense trying to solve mathematical problems.

There is error too on the other side, when the inspiration implied in religion is put on a level with that of some great teacher like Socrates. True, I believe the difference is of subject and purpose rather than of kind. In any case, all recognition of truth must be "thinking God's thoughts after him," as Kepler said. But those who level Christ and Socrates commonly treat them both as purely human, instead of taking seriously the divine they ostensibly claim for both. By all means let Plato be called inspired, but not to the denial of even higher inspiration which may be evident elsewhere. There is a difference not only of degree but of subject between the parables of Jesus and the myths of Plato; and if living is higher than knowing, there can be no doubt which of the two has the higher theme and the more directly religious purpose. It is rather this difference of subject and purpose than a difference of kind in the inspiration which seems to distinguish the higher forms of revelation. There may also be a great difference in the matter of historical influence. Many "inspired" books (and some others, like the Chinese Classics, for which no claim of special inspiration is made) have been regarded more or less as Bibles by more or less civilized peoples, and more or less justified the canonical position assigned to them by a

more or less healthy influence in the world. By their fruits ye shall know them, was said to them of old; and this is a test which may help us to judge of teaching as well as of teachers.

For it is further to be noted that inspiration may vary greatly from man to man, or in the same man at different times; for no inspiration but that of perfect sinlessness can lift our mortal weakness to more than partial and intermittent views of things divine. The divine fire that in one man sputters out a few sparks may in another blaze up in a bright and clear flame. An Elijah may stand out one day in more than royal majesty on Carmel, and the next be cowering away from the threats of Jezebel. So the resulting revelation will vary as much in its purity from alloy of baser things. There are sayings in the Talmud which might be divine; but they stand in a very small proportion to the things that cannot be divine. Plato falls off at times, and even in the Bible there is surely a vast difference between Proverbs and Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Isaiah.

If then inspiration is not a piece of magic, but requires moral action from the seer himself, his first qualification must be the purity and truthfulness needed for the knowledge of things divine, and the revelation will commonly be won like other knowledge by patient and earnest effort. Balaam is not a real exception, though he is represented as a bad man, and yet as having much spiritual insight. We take the story as we find it, simply as a study of character; for if the son of Beor is a legend, there are other Balaams in history. You will note that he is not a bad man when we first

meet him, but one of lofty spiritual aims, and held in high and seemingly deserved respect, so that his insight is not surprising. But he has his unsoundness like the rest of us, so that when he begins to tamper with temptation he gets fairly on the downhill road, and becomes a bad man by the time he goes to his own place. The Jewish commentators are not so far wrong when they explain, That is, to Gehenna. The character may not be common, but it does occur. A man can feed for a short time on the husks of any knowledge he is allowing to wither; and spiritual knowledge is no exception.

But we cannot take the seer by himself without regard to his environment. Nature, history, and life must all contribute to the work. Amos draws his inspiration from the wilderness of Judah, while Isaiah is a statesman watching the advance of the Assyrian world-power. The Old Testament speaks the language of the mountain heights, the Koran the dialect of the desert. Saul of Tarsus unites in his own person the cultures of Israel and Greece and Rome, while St. John has fed for more than half a century on memories of one who spake as never man spake. Æschylus is stirred to prophecy by the ruin of Persian pride, Gregory VII by the rampant anarchy of feudal Europe. Luther denounces the rapacious ungodliness of a heathenized papacy, and the Puritan delivers his testimony against the immoral frivolity of Stuart society. They are all men of their own age, speaking to their own contemporaries. If there are a few great men like John Scotus or Frederick of Sicily so faintly marked by the characters of their

own age that at first sight they might almost belong to another, these are men we never find among the prophets.

The prophet's power is not in predictions of the future, though he may adventure some, nor in visions of another world if he have any, but in vivid understanding of his own age. Insight is his mark, not foresight, though marvellous foresight may come of true insight. He may see as clearly as any statesman the bearing of political or social questions; but his point of view is not the statesman's. He looks at the world like Spinoza *sub specie æternitatis*, though not as a purely intellectual problem like Spinoza, nor even as a purely moral problem related to impersonal right, but as a religious problem related to a living God. His aim is to see the world of his own time as God sees it—to tear open its hypocrisies and self-deceits, to unmask its falsehoods, to give its ambitions and achievements their true value, to trace and cherish every seed of good in it,—in a word, to view it in the unchanging light of the Eternal's right and goodness. God's words are what he strives to speak; and therefore he must needs begin, Thus saith the Lord. So Mahomet saw through the heathenism of the Arabs, and told them in God's name that their idol-worships turned his face away from them. So Jesus of Nazareth saw the obsoleteness of the Temple worship, and the immorality of the traditions which the Pharisees had put in its place, and traced to the estrangement of the nation from God the hatred of Gentiles, which made the Temple first a house of merchandise, then a cave of brigands, and at last a Roman slaughter-house.

The prophet speaks not to future ages, but to the men of his own time. His words are shaped by the ideas of his own time, and by the environment of his own time. If Israel is the kingdom of Jehovah, he will reach his conception of the heavenly King by idealizing the earthly prince[1] of David's line. Something also of the splendour of the heavenly will be reflected on an earthly viceroy who shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. The ideal kingdom of the future is the earthly kingdom as he knows it idealized. "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all . . . neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, . . . so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them."[2] It is the old kingdom of Ezekiel's youth; but the feud of tribes is forgotten, the idols are abolished, and the weakness of Zedekiah is remembered no more. So too the rest of the pictures of the future.

To the men of his own time the prophet speaks, not to others; yet his words are words for all generations. He watches the signs of the times as keenly as any scheming politician; but the facts of time are not mere events to him, but the embodiment of eternal

[1] The proper title of the earthly king was נָגִיד *ruler*, not מֶלֶךְ *king*, *c.g.* 1 Sam. x 1, 1 Kings xvi 2.

[2] Ezek. xxxvii 21–24.

principles. If God is God, the course of history must be not only rational, but the ordered purpose of eternal right and goodness; and we know generally what that purpose is. If we cannot cast a horoscope of men and nations, we can see the moral forces working in the world, and the moral forces must prevail in the end. Thus, if the Assyrian be the embodiment of godless violence, God's rightness requires that he should pass away when he has done the work appointed him. An unrighteous power cannot be a righteous God's last word in history. If Jerusalem has sinned, God's rightness requires that she should suffer; but God's goodness requires also that she should be restored when her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity pardoned. Then straightway the final victory. The prophet looks backward from the end of time, as well as forward from his own age, so that his vision has no perspective. It is a dissolving view. If the judgment of Israel is the foreground, the judgment of the world looms up behind it, and looms up more impressively the longer we look. Each present enemy, be it Assyria or Babylon or Greece or Rome, so fully embodies for him the principle of godless pride, that when that is overcome the last enemy is destroyed, and the whole contest is ended. This is idealism, however shaped by the solid facts of present history; therefore on one side the prophet's words find a true fulfilment in every age, and on another they can have no complete fulfilment before the end of time. He sees the streamlet rushing down the slope, and knows that it must reach the sea; but we in later times have traced it swirling through many a narrow

pass, and joining its course with many a stream from many another mountain range; and we know that there is a long and weary journey still before the majestic river can pour its waters into the eternal ocean.

Some persons may raise the question here, whether prophecy is not the very thing Lord Gifford barred out by the word *miraculous*. So it might be, if it were presented in the old way, as a peculiar power of prediction depending very little on moral qualities. But the prophecy we are speaking of is no way magical, and is not specially concerned with prediction. It is the insight natural to a pure heart and truthful mind, which is open to us all; and so far as we too labour for a pure heart and truthful mind there is no reason why we should not in our measure share the gift with them of old. To the best of my judgment, this moral insight (if the divine element in it be taken into account) covers all alleged prophecy, whether preaching or prediction, which needs to be seriously considered; and we shall run some risk of turning inspiration into magic if we go further. At all events this moral insight is a plain fact, and covers much more of the ground than is commonly supposed. Indeed, even on sceptical principles (if I may adopt them for the moment) I cannot help thinking that the critics are often much too ready to bring up the universal solvent, by dating alleged predictions after the event. For instance, there seems to be nothing of itself unlikely in the statement that Nathan gave to David some such promise of an enduring house as we find recorded.[1] Far too much

[1] 2 Sam. vii.

may have been found in it; but the belief of later times that it came true is not sufficient reason for dating it after the Return.

Another reason for the permanent value of prophecy is that human nature is much the same in all ages. The cheating tradesman in Amos or Micah has left a large posterity, Pharisees and Sadducees are always with us, and Jews and Greeks are as common in London as they ever were at Corinth, though we call them other names. As of old, one man leans to tradition, another to his own understanding; one wants a miracle to crush his doubts, while another debases the search for truth into intellectual fencing. The old passions are unchanged, the old cleavages of thought are permanent from age to age. Therefore the prophet's message is abiding, though his words must wear the dress of time.

But if revelation is thus closely related to the thought of its own time, it must be a subject of development like human thought itself. To an uncultivated people even simple truth can only be given in simple form, under vivid images and sensuous conceptions. The rude justice of an avenger of blood may be a true revelation for men who were used to tribal fights; and a national God of Israel might be a stage on the road to a Father in heaven. As thought developed, and problem after problem opened out in course of ages, so must revelation too develop out in answer to them. Thus the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth would have been premature in Israel if the teaching of history had not made acute the conflict between the universalism of

prophecy and the particularism of the law; and premature in the world, if the blows of the Roman hammer had not welded the nations of the earth into a political unity. There cannot be a revelation given once for all in all the fulness of its meaning. If Islam claims to be such, Christianity does not. Even though Jesus of Nazareth declared himself to be the full and final revelation of the Father, he warned his disciples that it would be a work of time to recognize the full meaning of his Person. Revelation must start from rude beginnings, and gradually develop (may be with loss as well as gain at every step) the form which explains its earlier growth, and is the only form by which it can be reasonably judged.

There seems then to be nothing in the conception of revelation to require that the prophet should be infallible, in the sense that his statements of scientific and historic truth, his judgments of men, and his presentations of moral truth, should in all cases commend themselves entirely to the maturer views of later ages. Inspiration is not bound summarily to do away the limitations of human nature. And if the prophet himself need not be infallible, neither need the record of his words.

But some will say, If the prophet's message is as human as if it were nothing more than human, it cannot escape the touch of human infirmity. Were he a mere tool in God's hands, a mere channel of communication and nothing more, the divine message might be given as unconditioned truth, or at least without any admixture of error. But if it is any way conditioned by passing

through his mind, there must be some alloy in the truth he declares; and if there is any alloy at all, how can we make allowance for it, or what security have we that there is any truth left? Better no message at all than one we cannot positively know to be delivered with unerring accuracy.

Extremes meet again. This used to be the standard defence of verbal inspiration; and the antitheists have now found out that it is a *reductio ad absurdum* of all inspiration. But before we go further, is there not one plain blunder on the surface? If God sends a message, he will choose the messenger; and we need not put the case that he will do what no man of common sense will do, by choosing such a messenger as will entirely falsify it. But what of the main argument? We can all agree to the first step—that if man is not purely passive in receiving the message, it cannot escape the touch of human infirmity—and then we part company. The believer in verbal inspiration says that revelation is real, and therefore man's part is passive; the antitheist replies that as a matter of fact man's part is not passive, and therefore revelation cannot be real. Extremes meet again in the assumption that if revelation be real the message cannot be touched with human infirmity; and this assumption is false. Given a true revelation, it is neither possible nor needful, perhaps not even desirable, for it to escape the imperfections of human infirmity.

On the human side, it is not possible. Whatever be the prophet's purity and truthfulness, there are limits at all events to his sympathy with things divine, and therefore to his capacity of receiving them. Some things he

could not understand if they were told him, and some that he does understand he will only understand in part; for he can only understand them in terms of his own knowledge. He cannot make bricks without straw; and if the straw is not of the best, the bricks may be the worse for it. He might no doubt be kept from error by a supernatural dictation overriding his human weakness as often as might be necessary; and the believers in verbal inspiration had to suppose that this dictation was given. But the antitheists (and some who were much the reverse of antitheists) very justly replied that this is a large assumption, and quite unlike all other action supposed to be divine. Even if it be granted that a special revelation may require special means, we cannot easily believe that revelation in its special form drops its moral requirements and sinks into the mechanical. At all events, the theory is contrary to evidence. Some alleged revelations claim no such inerrancy; and if any do, they completely fail to make good their claim. Errors of transmission, such as various readings, are undeniable. These, however, may be allowed to pass, though they make the inerrancy rather futile; and many other difficulties may be got over with more or less success; but after all reasonable allowances, all sacred books of all religions leave a considerable remainder of facts hopelessly inconsistent with any theory of verbal inspiration. And failing some such supernatural interference to put his human weakness out of the way, the prophet cannot do more than give his message subject to that weakness, in so far as the message itself does not lift him above it.

Perhaps it is not even desirable that the message should be given free from human weakness. If God is good, he must have put limitations on us and allowed their consequences for a good purpose, so that it might not be for our good if those limitations were broken through by a higher power. It is just the power of the prophet, that he speaks as man to men on God's behalf; and if he is to speak as man, he must speak with the limitations of human weakness. If the weakness of the man is done away, the power of the prophet is done away too. It is but a case of the great question of free will. Whatever the advantages of acting freely, and whatever the advantages of acting necessarily, at all events omnipotence itself cannot give us both together.

As regards the divine side, I am not aware that any immediate purpose for inspiration has been suggested but that of securing the faithful delivery of the message; and if God's purpose is not to be stultified, it must secure such delivery so far as that purpose requires. This is the germ of truth in verbal inspiration, though the theory itself is the same logical mistake as that of church infallibility. Whether God sends a message or founds a church, we can safely say that he will not allow his purpose to be completely and finally stultified by any perversity of men; but it is a monstrous leap from this to the inference that the words of a book or the decisions of a church must be pure truth. Inspiration then, which is the training of the prophet, will guarantee his message so far as its proper purpose requires, but not necessarily any further. If more be asserted, it will have to be proved; and that not by *a priori* assumptions, but by

the evidence of the message itself, whether so in fact it is.

The principle seems clear, though its application may be hindered by doubts how far the purpose of the message extends. On doubtful ground we must move with caution; but if anything seem to belong only to the form of the message, we must not be surprised to find mistakes in it. Conversely, anything clearly essential must be true, if the message is divine. Christianity, for instance, so obviously makes the Person (not the teaching) of Christ the message, that its records do seem pledged to give a substantially true account of his life and character; so that, if they fail in this, the message is false, or at any rate very different from what the Christians take it for. If there be a divine message, there or elsewhere, it must be perfect, but perfect only for its proper purpose. And that purpose may be rather to stimulate conscience than to give full information. A character can be clearly shewn by a very meagre selection of incidents. At any rate, we cannot assume that the record will be perfect for any use to which we may please to put it—say, as *sortes sanctorum*, as a text-book of science or as a horoscope of the future.

The next step would be to investigate the proper purpose of a special revelation, if such there be, and see how far it can be defined beforehand. First, however, it will be necessary to discuss another question of great importance. As we have seen, we are not so well acquainted with God's plans and methods that we can form any presumption against a special revelation or a special messenger entrusted with it. But is it equally open to

him to use special means? Has Natural Theology anything to say on the possibility that such a message may involve facts of the kind commonly called miraculous? In past ages men believed not only that it might, but that it must; so that a revelation not vouched by miracle could not be divine. Of late years, however, the tendency has been to a summary rejection of miracle as a self-evident untruth. Instead of proof, it is become a pure encumbrance on a revelation. So manifest is the absurdity that it is waste of time to consider the evidence; all that can possibly be worth doing is to see how the untruth arose. As the early Christians were ordered straight to execution the moment they declared themselves Christians, so miracle is condemned the moment it appears as miracle. Its opponents, to do them justice, are polite enough to give it a trial, but only a sort of *post-mortem* trial, subject to the condition that evidence offered for the defendant shall in no case be allowed to affect the sentence that has already been pronounced in the name of science.

If miracle be defined as contrary to the order of things or unrelated to it, all that can be said is that such a thing is not even thinkable, much less possibly true. But the definition presented by its advocates is not this; and if we summarily assume that it can be reduced to this we summarily assume the question at issue. Even the incautious people who delight in telling us that miracle is contrary to the natural order, will strenuously maintain that it is in accordance with some higher or spiritual order; and their plea cannot be set aside till the natural order is proved to be the whole

order. But the more sober opinion has always been, as Butler puts it, that while miracle is confessedly unlike the natural order as at present known to us, our knowledge is not so complete that we can safely pronounce it contrary to the natural order. So Augustine too had put it long before,[1] and so I will take it, though I think the unlikeness is more precisely to the natural order as known at the time of the event. Given the story of a cure performed by Jesus of Nazareth, I do not see that the questions raised by it would be any way affected if we were now to discover scientific means of doing the same thing—unless of course we had reason to believe that he actually used some such scientific means. Such a case excepted, it would seem that whatever is a miracle for its own time is equally a miracle for posterity, so far as concerns its unlikeness to the natural order.

Apologists may be right in telling us that we cannot safely assume that God cannot go outside the natural order by causing a natural sequence without a natural antecedent; but it is not safe to emphasize the point in the way some of them do, as if their whole case depended on it. "Law," indeed, is not a constraining force, and is only made such by a confusion of metaphor. It is but a symbol summing up such facts as we have observed hitherto; and any new fact may require us to amend our symbol. But the question is not of God's power to go beyond the natural order, but whether there is reason to

[1] Aug. *de Gen. ad Lit.* vi 13 : Nec ista cum fiunt, contra naturam fiunt, nisi nobis quibus aliter naturæ cursus innotuit; non autem Deo, cui hoc est natura quod fecerit.

think he has actually done so, and on this I must diverge from some, perhaps many, of the apologists. If we had perfect knowledge, both of the natural order and of the facts of history, I am inclined to think we should find that as a matter of fact such natural order has never been broken.

This, however, is no more than a verbal concession. The real question is, What precisely ought we to mean in this connexion by the natural order? Supposing an alleged fact to be contrary thereto, we cannot on that account pronounce it impossible, unless we have so defined the natural order as to include in it all things that are under any circumstances possible. This is not the usual scientific sense of the word; but it is the only sense that will make the objection tenable. Anyone can see, though all do not remember, the fallacy of limiting it to such part of the physical order as is known to us by past experience. The controversy would be much lightened if the opponents of miracle would frankly set aside such arguments as tell equally against a discovery of any sort, or a phenomenon we cannot verify at our pleasure, like a comet in a hyperbolic orbit. These may be the arguments of clumsy thinkers; but clumsy thinkers are apt to be noisy, and cannot in any case be omitted from that counting of heads which appears to be the final test of truth for the natural man, who hates nothing more than the trouble of having serious beliefs of his own.

Now in this connexion the natural order does not mean simply the physical order of things, but that order as modified by the action of persons; for even the

necessitarians who finally resolve such action into the physical order do not deny that it brings out results, and that some results are not brought out without it. Hence no result is contrary to the natural order unless it cannot be reached by any action of persons. Now the results which men obtain from the natural order depend mainly on their knowledge of science. As the results which the ancients obtained are no measure of those we ourselves obtain, so these again are no measure of the results we hope our children will obtain by a better knowledge of science. Yet if science is true sympathy with the power behind Nature, it is but imperfect and one-sided sympathy. It is imperfect because it is an uncompleted evolution; and it is one-sided because it so poorly represents the moral side implied in the trustworthiness of that power. Yet such as it is, it gives us such power over Nature as we possess.

At this point I submit that even the greatest imaginable victories of science are no measure of the results a man might obtain, or possibly enable others to obtain, if he were in perfect sympathy of feeling, thought, and will with the divine order of the entire universe,—a character theologically described as without sin. To put the matter in a concrete form, let us imagine the story true, that Jesus of Nazareth was such a man. In that case he must have had power far greater than our own, and been able to do in a perfectly natural way many things we cannot do, and some perhaps which no advance of science that we can look for would enable us to do. If we think out what the supposition means, we may find it not unlikely that

most of the "signs" ascribed to him would be well within the power of such a man. Nobody doubts that his vivid sympathy might account for some obscure healings; but when once we are off the ground of technical scientific skill we can establish no distinction of kind between these signs and others which seem to lie further from common experience. Given such a man, I see nothing unlikely in the story that he had power to raise the dead. If it is not our own experience that Love is stronger than death, the reason may be that none but such a man can ever wield the fulness of its power.

But what shall we say of divine action? Ultimately it may be "all one act at once"; but for us men with our limitations it is like our own, a series of actions in time. Only under the forms of time can we form any idea at all of timeless action; and if the universe is rational, such idea must be true so far as it goes. If then God acts in time, his action must be strictly natural, so far as it is personal action like our own, so rearranging physical forces as to bring out new results, and so influencing men that they do freely what they would not otherwise have done. Such natural divine action can hardly be pronounced impossible if there is any personal divine action at all in the world; and though it will not cover alleged miracles that are trifling or immoral, it may cover some of a more sober kind, for we cannot take for granted that it will cause only such natural sequences as we have seen before. I hardly know how far I am expressing any general opinion on the matter; but

if every alleged miracle of the New Testament were supposed true, such strictly natural divine action would seem enough to account for all of them. Nor do I see that any other action is needed to explain even the "breaks" of evolution. Life would come from matter, but from matter as originally moulded by infinite wisdom and infinite goodness, while matter itself would in some way beyond the reach of finite wisdom be evolved from the timeless world.

We may get a side-light on the whole subject by returning to our position that man is defined by evolution as essentially spirit, however conditioned by matter. If so, the highest embodiment we can imagine for him is rightly described by St. Paul as a spiritual body (*σῶμα πνευματικὸν*), meaning not a body made of spirit, if such be thinkable, but a body in which spirit has complete control of matter. And it must be within God's power to evolve such a body: for, as Lotze has shewn, we are not to conceive of God as so strong that he can overcome the utmost resistance of matter, but as so related to matter that it cannot resist him at all. And must not the perfect sympathy of the sinless man with the divine order of the universe give him something of this power, divine and also natural?

Isolated physical wonders without moral significance are not worth discussion. If miracle may be supposed at all, it cannot be supposed given for the trivial purpose of displaying divine power, for the needless purpose of proving divine power, or for the impossible purpose of compelling unwilling belief in something better than power. Be the wonder what it might,

something more than a wonder would be needed to distinguish divine from diabolical. The only reasonable purpose we can imagine for it, apart from what we must consider secondary or incidental ends, is to emphasize by uncommon facts the right and goodness which to us are less conspicuously declared by the common facts of experience. To call it more divine or more directly divine than common facts is meaningless or superstitious; but in some cases in some stages of history it might suggest the divine more vividly. Hence the uncommonness of the facts could not be more than a means to the end; and the end would be such more vivid suggestion. We may therefore safely set aside all cases of alleged miracle which have some other end than this. These cannot be true; others may be worth discussion.

It is plainly futile to discuss the possibility of miracle with anyone who starts from the axiom (avowed or not) that there is no God, or none of whom anything can be certainly known; or that he cannot or will not act in the world, or that he acts by necessity and not by choice. Such a man has no common ground with a believer in that possibility. So long as he holds his axiom the question is not open for him. If evidence be offered he cannot seriously approach it. He may go through the form of discussing it, and give reasons good or bad for not accepting it; but so long as he holds his axiom he is bound to find such reasons in the face of any evidence whatever. It is useless to debate surface matters when they are no more than the outcome of deeper doubts.

A general objection sometimes made is that if many stories of miracle are confessedly false, there can be no

certainty about others. This is the ground recently taken by an eminent student, of whom I wish to say nothing that is not respectful.[1] But I cannot reconcile this argument with the first rule of investigation, that everything is to be judged by its own evidence and not by the evidence of something else. If many charters have been forged, can we have no certainty about the Great Charter of King John?

However, if it be allowed that the possibility of miracle is not to be summarily rejected without regard to evidence, we must here particularly notice that some groups of alleged miracles are presented to us as a connected series of historical events belonging more especially to the moral order, and vividly suggestive of divine right and goodness; and as such a series they must be judged, and not otherwise. If we have before us a theory that these things are true, the only scientific way of dealing with it is to take it exactly as it stands, and make sure that we understand it, before we compare such theory (and not something else) with facts. In this case it would be a serious fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* if we insisted on discussing them singly as unconnected marvels, like Huxley's example of the centaur in the streets of London, or if we laid down any canons of historical criticism which are not reasonable tests of the particular phenomena alleged, or if we left out of consideration the moral significance claimed for them as parts of a coherent moral scheme.

For instance, I am not aware of any alleged miracle which might not reasonably be rejected, if it could fairly

[1] G. L. Dickinson, in *Hibbert Journal*.

be viewed as an event out of relation to others. Thus the Resurrection is one thing, if treated as a story of a Jew who returned from the grave with no particular result; quite another when presented as the central event of history.

Again, it is a common fallacy to suppose that extraordinary events require an extraordinary weight of evidence to prove them, much as the False Decretals required seventy-two witnesses to prove a crime against a bishop, and sifted them with such sweeping objections that hardly one would have been left unchallenged. Supposing the alleged miracle morally and otherwise admissible, so that nothing remains but to examine the historical evidence for such and such events, the kind and quantity of such evidence needed to complete the proof will depend almost entirely on the nature of the outward fact alleged. Some facts, for instance, are more likely to be invented than others, and some are more difficult of observation. Some are so delicate that we should not be satisfied without skilled evidence; others are so evident, or form such a series, that almost any honest witness will suffice. Thus many tales of apparitions which seem honestly told are evident mistakes, which a competent observer would not have made; but when we come to so circumstantial a story as (we will say) that of Mrs. Veal, we must either accept it as true or reject it as deliberate invention. No eye-witness could have made such a series of mistakes. No doubt we make a difference between a fact of weighty meaning and an unimportant story. But our inference is not, We want double evidence: it is the very different one,

We must make doubly sure that we have sufficient evidence. We may want a margin before we are sure: but then we stake life if need be without hesitation on our conclusion. If an alleged fact is even unique, that is good ground for caution, but none for scepticism.

There is a similar fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* in the most telling of all arguments—"Miracles do not happen now." Why should they? Suppose the contention is, not that miracles are scattered broadcast over history, but that they are connected with a certain critical period in the past. Then what becomes of the objection? It can hardly be maintained that a power which is not alleged to have done these things except for certain reasons is bound to go on doing them (or cannot help doing them) when those reasons have ceased to exist. It is no evasion to point out that past events cannot be directly verified by present experiment. Nor is the appeal to history necessarily doubtful. Root out once for all from your mind any lurking idea that historical evidence is made uncertain by lapse of time. There is a change when the document is no longer backed up by living memory; but after that there is little further change. If writings are lost or mutilated, whatever remains, remains exactly what it was at first. If texts become corrupt in course of time, words drop out of use, and manners and ways of thinking change, these are difficulties with which historical criticism can deal almost as effectively after twenty centuries as after two. The number of the Beast was exactly the puzzle to Irenæus that it is to us; and Augustine's nearness to the Gospel gave him scarcely any advantages above our

own for understanding it. Nor do the changes bear much relation to the lapse of time. The old Greeks are easier to understand than the men of the Middle Ages; and the laws of Hammurabi seem scarcely more obscure than the Dooms of Alfred. We have more in common with Pericles and Cæsar than with Karl the Great and Nicephorus Phocas. The Old Testament bears the stamp of the unchanging East, and the apostolic age is in many ways more modern than the eighteenth century. It is utter fallacy to imagine, as many do, that history steadily becomes more uncertain as we trace it backwards into what are metaphorically called the mists of antiquity.

There is one thing more that ought not to be left unsaid. It is futile to argue, as many do, that "even if miracles be supposed true, they prove nothing but themselves."[1] Is that so? Judge for yourselves. Let the story of Jairus' daughter (as interrupted by the woman with the issue of blood) be supposed true. Will it not compel us to believe, not simply that Jesus of Nazareth had power to do this thing, but also that he shewed much patience and delicacy in doing it? And must not such patience and delicacy count for something in any reasonable opinion about him? I confess I am half ashamed to go on laying such simple things before you; but the simple things are overlooked, and those who know most of current controversies will bear me witness that I am not fighting shadows of my own imagination, but answering as best I can the floating thoughts of thousands.

Our last illustration brings us to the heart of the

[1] Thus (not however in these words) Nettleship, *Remains*, 104, 105.

matter, for we have already seen that patience and delicacy belong to character and personality, while power does not. The men of the eighteenth century were more influenced than they knew by the old Calvinism in which a God of power took back by predestination the freedom he seemed to have given in creation; and by the older Romanism, in which a God of power was propitiated by elaborate ceremonial and easy-going morality. They were still in the after-swell of the great storm of the Reformation. But a God of power cannot be revealed without works of power; therefore miracle being a work of power was held indispensable to revelation. In this they were certainly wrong. Their imperfect idea of God led them first to empty the "signs" of their spiritual significance, then to debase the revelation itself to vague moralism and legal fiction. They forgot that the still small voice may speak more loudly than the earthquake and the storm, and that the shining of a saintly face is more divine than works of might. This is what Jesus of Nazareth meant when he ranked the raising of the dead below the preaching of a gospel to the poor.[1]

It was a clear advance when the science of the nineteenth century led men to think of God as law. The indefinite outline of power was now filled in, if not with a living Person, at least with a method of working. But a God of law cannot be revealed except by works of law; therefore miracle being a breach of law was held impossible in revelation. And this again seems clearly wrong. Their imperfect idea of God led them first to

[1] Mt. xi 6, noting the climax.

limit his action to the physical order, then to put the physical order in his place. They forgot that persons are more than things, and that the physical order will not account even for things.

The eighteenth century was right, in so far as God has power; and the nineteenth, in so far as law is the method of his working: but now we see that there can be neither law nor power without an intending will behind; and the character of that will is not unknown to us. If religion, science, thought itself are not all a delusion together, God cannot be other than self-revealing right and goodness, and the "greater and more perfect tabernacle"[1] where he reveals himself to men cannot be less than the entire universe of things and persons in space and time. If divine action is made the test of miracle, then the universe in all its parts is one stupendous miracle. If "direct" divine action, no one form of divine action is more direct than another. If breach of law, we never can be certain whether any events whatever are miraculous or not. If the test is to be real, it must be a moral test based on the fact that God deals with men as moral beings. He is the head, not only of the physical order of things, but of a moral order of persons; and the two, being both of his creation, must form one organic whole, yet so that the physical order has neither sense nor meaning apart from the moral or spiritual which governs it and causes all its movements. Therefore we have no right so to limit God's action by physical law at present known to us as to foreclose the possibility that he may please to

[1] Hebr. ix 11.

reveal himself to moral persons in ways which after all do not otherwise transcend the physical order of things than does the ordinary action of our own will, though they transcend it in particular manifestations unfamiliar to beings of finite knowledge and finite wisdom. Whether he has in fact so done is a question of history on which we cannot enter here. All that Natural Theology can tell us is that there is no reason why it should not be decided on historical evidence like other historical questions, for we have found nothing of weight in the *a priori* presumption so often brought against it.

LECTURE VIII.

POSSIBLE METHODS OF REVELATION.

I.

We can put our question now: How far can we state beforehand the purpose and chief end of a special or central revelation? At first sight all is thick darkness. God will send it, it will do his pleasure and not return to him void: and that is all that can be said. So there are many who tell us that we ought not to form expectations, but simply to wait till it comes, before we begin to study it. There is a side of truth in this view, for expectations have often been made too definite; but how can we recognize it when it does come if we form no expectations at all? Surely we must have some idea beforehand what sort of a message may be divine, and what cannot be divine. A central or special revelation is at any rate a revelation of some sort; therefore we must expect it to be serious, rational, and moral. Even William Law would have granted so much, though he rightly objected to the presumption of dictating at what time or to what persons it shall be given, or what shall be its precise contents. These questions may be quite above us. But allowing all this, and remembering that there must be an element of mystery in revelation as in

all knowledge, and very likely a deeper mystery in a special or central revelation, it does not follow that we can make no forecast at all of its general character.

In the first place, it is by supposition a revelation which goes beyond the general revelation through the natural and the spiritual order as that revelation appears to the generality of mankind. This fact of itself tells us a good deal. We have twice already discussed the probability of such a revelation, and both times found that much might be said on either side. The fundamental fact of experience is that we have done that which is evil, and disobeyed the moral law which was set before us. What then? If our first impulse was to suppose that God would of his goodness give us any further help we wanted, our easy optimism was checked by the fear that our sin may have brought on us his permanent displeasure. Yet however we might deserve this, there was again a possibility that the misery we have brought on ourselves by sin might of itself be a successful appeal to perfect goodness. The more we looked at this last point the stronger it seemed; but upon the whole we agreed not to make the venture of faith that time, but to leave the question open.

Now, if such a revelation has actually been given (which we are now supposing), we know for certain that we have not permanently estranged him from us. Our sin he cannot but hate as rebellion against the order he has made: to ourselves we learn that he is good notwithstanding. We might have hoped it from his continued goodness in the natural world, where the sun rises on the evil and the good, and the rain falls on the

just and on the unjust. We might also have hoped that if mercy is not unknown to men, neither is it impossible to God. But a faint and chequered hope, more fitful dream than reasoned thought, is a poor thing to set against the bodings of conscience, the iron bonds of natural sequence, the overwhelming horrors of remorse. Yet if there be such a revelation, our hope is true. If God speaks in it, he can only speak in mercy, and the first word of it will have to be, So God loved the world. Had it gone on, that he gave the Koran to Mahomet, and sent him forth to preach life and paradise to all that would receive him, this might very well have been *primâ facie* the special revelation we were looking for, though we could not have said more without knowing something about the Koran. In any case, such a revelation must be a message of goodness, in the sense that God's goodness is not an incidental fact, or one fact among others, but the ground and meaning, core and centre, of the whole.

In the next place, though its immediate occasion must be the fact that men have gone wrong in spite of the general revelation as generally known, we cannot safely make this the only reason for such revelation. It might possibly have been given even if men had not gone wrong, though very likely not in the same form. We cannot say but that the action on God's part best fitted to deal with the broken unity of will and conscience might also have been best fitted to deal with man if he had never gone astray. So while such revelation must be the answer of God's goodness to the misery of sin, we cannot shut out the possibility that it may have further aims.

We can see some of these, if the evolution is not to stop short of the ideal; but of others it is not unlikely that we are wholly ignorant.

We may take it that if there be a special revelation God will deal in it with sin. Physical evil, so far as it is not complicated with sin, is his creation, and calls for no special action on his part; nor would the satisfaction of our curiosity about another world be worthy of any. But sin is our creation, not his, for what he gave us in freedom was not licence to do wrong—only the power of doing wrong involved in the power of doing right. Moreover, if there is any forward evolution possible for us as beings of the spiritual order, sin plainly bars the way. Whatever the future may have in store for us, we cannot receive it till we are on better terms with the order of things. Therefore in a special revelation God will deal with sin, whatever further ends he may have in view.

How he will deal with sin we cannot presume to say precisely beforehand, not only because we do not know those possible further ends, but for the still more serious reason that we do not fully know how the world appears to him. We are creatures of space and time, and our sight is limited by sense and dimmed by sin. Beings every way imperfect cannot scan the universe with the eyes of perfect goodness and perfect rightness wielding perfect wisdom and perfect power. Nevertheless, finite knowledge need not be untrue. An observer in London will see neither so much nor so well as if he moved his telescope to the clearer mountain air of Teneriffe or Arequipa; but what he does see need not be illusion.

So in an infinitely higher way God must see all that we see, and an infinity more, and see with perfect clearness in their final meaning things we see dimly or not at all; but what we do see need not be illusion. So far as we are his image—and all thought is meaningless unless to some extent we are—we must in virtue of that affinity be able to see things to some extent as he sees them. True thought of ours is the deciphering of his thought, true goodness of ours is the copying of his goodness, and conscience is his voice within us, so that if we choose to follow it our will can struggle after his, and find in his service perfect freedom. It is neither finiteness nor sense, but sin alone that mars the image of God within us, and makes us the failures we feel we are.

If therefore we essay to see the world as it appears to God, our task is not the infinite presumption it may seem. We see in part, and know in part; but some things we do see, and some too we certainly know. Inconceivably as the infinity beyond our reach might enlarge our thoughts, if human weakness could bear to know it, it would not utterly change them. There must be some fixed points, as in a child's knowledge, for we should learn that the words of our profoundest wisdom are like the lispings of a child. As the child knows the things he needs to know, so do we; and if when he grows older he finds the world immensely larger and more wonderful than he imagined, he does not find it essentially different. If he hears of other families and foreign countries, they are still families like his own, and realms of land and water like his own. The sun shines on all, and the freemasonry of

human thought makes him more or less at home in all. Nowhere does he come upon enchanted ground, with other laws than those of common day. He never meets with gods ascending from the sea, or hears the words of might on which infernal powers wait. Go where he may, he treads the soil of middle earth, and meets but mortals like himself.

Like this it must be with his elders also. The unknown may be—must be—far greater and more wonderful than we imagine; but if it is of the same creation as the known, it must be so far like it as to contain nothing finally irrational or inconsistent with perfect rightness and perfect goodness. As the thought in man which traces God's thought in the natural order makes us more or less at home throughout the world of nature, so the conscience which follows God's thought in the higher order makes us more or less at home throughout the world of spirit. Be the wonders of the unknown what they may, we shall never come to an enchanted ground where wrong is blameless, or malice duty. The laws of truth and right can no more fail than those of space and time. Go where we may, it is God's world still, and we know generally what it must be like; and therefore we know to some extent how the whole must appear to God's all-seeing eye.

Yet even here there is a metaphor that will mislead us if we are not careful. Though it must be true that he is the high and mighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who doth from his throne behold all the dwellers upon earth, this cannot be the whole truth. His view of the world cannot be taken simply from

the outside, after the deistic fashion; though neither can we simply place him inside it as one person among others. He must be not only its outside sovereign but its inner life, working with and in the forces of Nature, and that not simply as one force which modifies the resultant of the rest, but as a living Person sustaining and preserving Nature, and in sustaining and preserving ever creating it afresh; and as a living Person guiding persons, working in them and through them, and by his voice in conscience ever labouring to call them back from the untruth and emptiness of sin. If conscience is real, he is not an idle spectator of the deadly struggle which threatens to wreck the moral issue of the universal evolution. He is himself our leader in the battle, ever pouring fresh courage into us and rallying our broken forces to the conflict, rejoicing with us in our victories and grieving for us, if not with us, in our failures and defeats. If even sinners can kindle with enthusiasm over enterprises pure and high, and flash down their indignation on doings base and vile, shall only God be cold and passionless? Is he the giver of all goodness, as on any theistic theory he must be, but himself a dweller in selfish bliss? A machine may be very admirable in its way, but a God who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities is lower than a dog who can. The philosophers never made a more disastrous blunder than when they thought to magnify his dignity by setting him above the battle, like a Xerxes looking down on Salamis, instead of in its midst. This is what we come to from the dreary sophism of the *via negativa*, which has been the curse

of speculative thought from the Upanishads and Plotinus to the monks and Herbert Spencer.

To God's all-seeing eye the universe as a whole must appear a true realization of his purpose, so far as that is yet developed. The vast substructure of the physical order has been built up in the course of ages with unfailing accuracy, and has now completed one great cycle of its history. The planets in their orbits and the dewdrops in the morning sun fulfil his word; and though physical evil is terrible to men who can brood over it, the animal world is notwithstanding a bright and joyous world. The physical order cannot of itself go wrong, for it is entirely subject to him, except so far as he has given freedom of action to other moral beings. Thus there is no room for failure in the universe except by the wrong action of those other beings. If there be devils, they are defined as devils by such wrong action. But the only failure certainly known to us is our own. The evolution of the ages went wrong at the point where it passed in man from the necessity of the physical order to the freedom of the spiritual; and if this wrong is not in some way righted it means the wreck of all. Measure first the prerogative and dignity of man by the length and complication of the vast evolution which has not only ended in him as it has ended in all existing species, but led up to him as the completed issue of the entire cycle, and the centre of a higher order than the physical. Of such a being even the daring words of the writer to the Hebrews are not incredible, that "not unto angels did he subject the world to come," but to man. At all events it is evident

that the issues of the new order in this world will be shaped more and more by the new force of human choice, and less and less by the old force of natural selection, which men are more and more deflecting and reversing. Man, in short, is the appointed guide and ruler of the new cycle, God's viceroy knowing good and evil, and gifted with the power of creating both. So much the greater must be the disaster, if he has gone aside and created sin. He is a ruler still, but a ruler out of sympathy with the true estate and order of the world entrusted to him.

If then there is any word from God beyond the general revelation as generally understood, we cannot doubt that he will deal in it with sin. If we cannot presume to say precisely how he will deal with it, Natural Theology does warrant us in saying some things. It is not likely that he will suddenly sweep the sinners out of existence, or compel them to be good. Either of these plans would seem a confession of failure—that he began to build, and was not able to finish. Either of them (supposing the former thinkable) would be a discontinuous leap downward and backward from the new order of freedom to the old order of necessity, and therefore a complete abandonment of the method of evolution. Such a blow would be destruction, not development, and if it came at all, as sheer "might from the Almighty"[1] it would have to come.

If the sinners were swept out of existence or forced to be good, there might be an end of sin; and if the process was gradual, there need be no breach of con-

[1] Joel i 15 : כְּשֹׁד מִשַּׁדַּי יָבֹא

tinuity; but sin would in either case be rather put out of sight than cured, and the mischief it has already done in the world and among men would remain to be further dealt with. If indeed we consider the destructive work of sin on other men and on the order of nature, we may be tempted to think that the larger part of the work would still remain to be done.

It would be much the same if men were frightened into good conduct, with the further difficulty that unless their fright amounted to actual compulsion it might not even diminish the amount of sin. It might suppress bad acts; but no mere fright can touch the evil will. This is of itself a fatal objection to the old idea that hell is a deterrent from sin; for if sin be in will, and only so far in acts as they express will, it is clear that no man ever sinned a sin the less for fear of hell. The utmost that can be granted is that as bad actions confirm bad habits, something might be gained if men could be frightened out of them, though much might also be lost if the danger of wrong action stimulated wrong desire, as it commonly does. At best, however, the gain would in no case amount to any cure for sin or for the smallest of its evils.

Crude ideas like these which mask the difficulty instead of overcoming it, assume that God is essentially power, and that his methods of government are those of an Eastern sultan. The sultan is very good to his people, and may overlook a good deal of disorder; but he is capable of ordering a massacre if he is provoked too far. Better wipe out a village than have it in chronic disturbance. If he does not go that length he

will be content with forcing it to keep the peace, and perhaps inflicting tremendous punishments at his pleasure on some of the rebels. This, I think, is no unfair account of the method still ascribed to God by some who count themselves correct believers. But the analogies of human government must always be imperfect when applied to a God of perfect goodness. Yet even so, they seem to point to something better than this. The best of kings may have to put down a revolt and punish some of the offenders according to law; but he counts the use of force an evil necessity, punishes no further than he is obliged, and never thinks his work thoroughly done till he has turned his rebels into loyal subjects. If an earthly king can try to do as much as this, we may be sure that God will do no less than this.

Yet how can he do it? Mere preaching is as useless as mere terror, unless there be some power in the message itself; and it is not easy to see what sort of a message would have power to turn man's heart from sin. A philosophy might touch reason, a religion feeling, a law action; but none of them would appeal to human nature as a whole. We are coming now to the dark places of Natural Theology, and shall have to pick our way with double caution, and with a sobering consciousness of our ignorance. Yet we are not without experience in the work of recovering them that are out of the way; and that experience would seem to suggest certain lines of action as possibly hopeful. The problem of revelation may be infinitely harder than our common rescue work in the slums, but it cannot be entirely

different in kind. Whether any of these lines of action or all of them together will suffice is more than we know; and whether or in what manner God may have used any of them is a question of history which a Gifford Lecturer must leave to others. But in any case and against all difficulties we are bound in all theistic hope to hold fast our trust that perfect goodness is not without the means of overcoming sin. To give up that hope would be intellectual as well as moral suicide.

Personal influence is the first of these lines of action, and the chief, for the others depend on it. When we have to reclaim and train to better things some degraded creature who is living in rebellion against the order of society, we begin with neither the teachings of philosophy nor the services of religion, nor with the commands of a law. These may all have their use later, and the last in particular may have a provisional use from the first, in keeping him from temptation, and temptation from him; but our first and principal aim is to get him under the influence of a better man than himself. Till this is done, practically nothing is done. Teaching is useless without example, feeling is empty till it has gathered round a living person, and obedience to right commonly begins with loyalty to one we love. So it begins in the home; and if the home has failed to do its work, we have to provide some other guiding influence. For a little distance on the downward course we may possibly be able to right ourselves; but we soon reach a point where there is no recovery without the gracious drawing of one who loves us more worthily than we love ourselves. Nothing else can give hope to

the despairing and self-respect to the degraded. Such drawing requires rather kindliness and sense of duty than commanding genius. Many a man has been conquered by the winning goodness of his intellectual inferiors; and sometimes the innocence of a child has been the salvation of its elders from evil ways. A vast amount of experience has gone to shape the rescue agencies around us; and it has shaped them into agencies for bringing personal influence to bear. Any other aims they may have are either helps to this or likely to prove mistaken. Nor is personal influence limited to personal intercourse, though that is its most vivid form. It may work for ages when embodied in writings or institutions. The good and bad effects of Buddhism and Islam largely represent the personal influence of their founders; and so far as Christian churches have done good work on the face of the earth, they seem to have done it by bringing men under the personal influence of Christ. In this the student of history will read the secret of their strength, and in lower ideals and meaner aims the causes of their weakness.

Personal influence, good or bad, comes from our real selves. Our concealments and hypocrisies are never very successful in disguising it, and in the long run fail entirely. This is why it is so great a force in the world. A man of clear and resolute purpose has a marvellous power of overcoming opposition, even when his purpose is a bad one. But with equal resolution and a lofty aim that overawes the consciences of all around him he is irresistible—at least for the moment. The time-servers, the cynics, the schemers, and the rest of

the weaklings count for nothing in the day of decision. He may have great faults, he may make great mistakes, he may see but one thing, though that he will see with intense and vivid clearness; but he will be a living and creative power. Eusebius saw dangers which Athanasius overlooked; but Athanasius is the hero of the fourth century. Erasmus had more culture and a wider view than Luther; but Luther is the giant of the German Reformation.

But the personal influence of such a man is more than a living soul. It is a quickening spirit. As the nature of life in the natural order is to gender life, so also is it in the spiritual. As fire kindles fire, leaping from one point to another, so spreads the sacred flame across the barriers of selfish pride and selfish interest. Enthusiasms may die away, scribes may take the place of prophets, and Pharisees may sit in Moses' seat; but the memory of that which once has been remains a power in the land.

The mountain peaks are made of common rocks, and the great scenes of history are no more than the open manifestation of the common forces of common life. The quiet man in a cottage, the patient woman at her daily toil, the very invalid on a couch, may be a quickening spirit as truly as the prophet on whose word a nation hangs. The power which draws the outcast to better things is the same that lifts common men above themselves. The purpose is the same, the method is the same; only the difficulties are a little greater. Let us look at them.

There is no surer sign of a degraded character than

a vague habit of suspecting our neighbours without definite and reasonable grounds. In general we judge them by ourselves till we see reason to the contrary, so that if we are ourselves false or vile, our impulse is to set down the fairest of actions to the foulest of motives, and in the noblest of men to see no more than the most successful of hypocrites. This is our first difficulty with the undesirable—if we may slightly generalize a word of recent origin. He is so used to selfishness in himself and others that the unselfish kindness of a better man comes to him as a surprise. At first he suspects a cunning design, or simply does not understand it. He may take his good things willingly enough; but he needs time to get over his recurring doubt whether we are quite disinterested, and a much longer time before he fully realizes that we do not want simply to relieve his distress, but to make him strive to be a better man.

For here comes in a second and greater difficulty. The powers which ought to have been developed in healthy life have been weakened by rebellion against the order of things. The undesirable is commonly a poor creature in mind and body. He may have picked up a good deal of knowledge, though by this time it is usually rusting, and he may have plenty of cunning for base purposes; but outside these limits he is likely to be stupid. Feeling and conscience are in most things callous; and if the worst men sometimes have strange scruples and points of honour and touches of sensibility, such inconsistencies only shew that they have not entirely succeeded in making devils of themselves. Least

of all can the will escape debasement. If the undesirable has any firm purpose left, it must be bad. He will be like Milton's Belial,

> To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
> Timorous and slothful.

A few of these men are active enough in pursuing base ends, though their plans are rather clever than far-seeing; for like Napoleon they overlook the moral forces, and the moral forces usually foil them in the end. But they are more commonly weak as water, yielding to the first temptation, and shielding themselves behind the first lie that comes to hand. Even when we have won their confidence and made them as willing as such creatures can be to lead a better life, they are continually falling back from sheer weakness. The old temptation was too much for them; yet they are likely to resent the discipline which keeps them out of its way. Still, it is much easier to keep them right by undertaking their entire guidance, like the Jesuits in Paraguay, than to teach them to keep themselves right. It may be long before the best of them learn to stand alone; and some of them never learn to stand alone at all.

If it is the noblest of all work, it is also the hardest, to make a new man of the erring and fallen. The change is rightly compared in some religions to a new birth. It calls on us as guides, for wisdom and sympathy, unquenchable hope and never failing patience, not only of the lower sort which bears with toil and suffering, but of that higher which is not soured by failures and disappointments. These are qualities which cannot be acquired on a sudden, or hired for

a consideration. Unless the work itself inspires them, it cannot be done; but if we do it with all the strength of heart and soul and mind, it will inspire them. So those tell us with one voice who have a right to speak. They tell us that there is no work so full of suffering and disappointment, but none where suffering and disappointment are so transfigured into pure and lofty joy. Those who patiently receive them find that they have entertained angels unawares. The suffering and disappointment cannot be spared, for redeeming power is just in these. The one thing which more than any other is a charm to reach the erring and the fallen is the sight of others bearing willingly and lovingly the consequences of his own misdeeds. Suffering for others is a law of nature, and the loving acceptance of it is the fountain of the higher life.

The world has an easy standard, for it is content with forbidding certain actions as harmful to society; but if we take the higher standard of our own conscience, I am afraid we shall all find ourselves more or less of undesirables. If any one fact in life is clear and undeniable, it is that by our own fault we come far short of what we might be. Whether we do wrong boldly, or whether we make believe that it is right, or at any rate only a little wrong, we cannot do it without debasing conscience and mind and will together. If conscience admits unright, our sense of right is dulled; if mind makes excuses for it, our perception of truth is dimmed; if the will consents to it, our power of resistance is weakened for the next temptation. Our difference from the undesirable is not so much that we are morally better,

as that we avoid certain offences against society. But other forms of wrong-doing debase character in the same way, and perhaps quite as much. The man who never cherishes an unselfish thought is no better than the husk of a man; but if his actions pass muster, the world receives him without hesitation as a decent and respectable person. The world is right in doing so: the wrong is when we take its judgments of the needs of society for judgments of men. It may be that the open sins of sense we sin like beasts are less destructive to character than the sins of mind we sin like devils. The drunkard in the street may be less deeply depraved than the great leader of thought who has gambled away his conscience.

At all events, we Pharisees are so far like the Publicans that we cannot lift ourselves to a higher moral level without much the same helps. It is not exceptional depravity but common human weakness that calls for some gracious personal influence to set right our conscience, to brace our will, and even to clear our mind. That influence may come directly from one we love, or it may reach us indirectly from writings or through other men, or it may be the cherished memory of those whom death has parted from us; but in any case it must be an influence of human goodness, for it seems plain from experience that we cannot learn goodness to much purpose except from goodness in our fellow-men.

If then God should deal with sin, these are the lines of action which Natural Theology would seem to indicate as hopeful. Whether he will follow them is more than we can presume to say. There may be hindrances, and there may be a more excellent way unknown to us.

Whether as a matter of fact he has followed them is a question for the alleged particular revelations. All that can be said from the standpoint of Natural Theology is, that any such revelation which represents him as following them represents him as working on the deepest lines of human nature known to us, and is therefore so far perfectly credible.

Mediation must be a necessary part of any divine plan for dealing with sin, if there is meaning in the social order where man learns good and evil chiefly from his fellow-men. We must have the mediation at least of the prophet who speaks for God to men, and declares the divine significance of human thoughts and natural facts. A few systems, like Islam and Deism, seem content with this, as if mere preaching of truth were all that is needed. But if the analogy of ordinary rescue work is at all to be trusted, we shall be more inclined to follow religions generally in thinking that such divine plan will also include the mediation of the priest who speaks to God for men, and lays before him not only the needs of the natural life, but ever more and more the aspirations and struggles of a moral nature fast bound in sin but seeking to be freed from its bondage. Sin may be deeply rooted, and there are some who scarcely care to look below it; yet far below it spreads the real deep of human nature—that deep from which we cry for peace with the true order of things, and feel that all efforts of our own are vain to deliver us from our bondage. But the priest can give us no real help with his rites and ceremonies. They may set forth our need; but they cannot even make known to God anything

unknown to him before, much less turn aside the natural consequences of sin. The only direct use possible for them is in moral action on ourselves: and that they can only have by setting forth and vividly expressing to us the loving self-devotion either of the priest himself, or of others for whom he stands, or more likely both, for one who is no more than a representative is a prophet, not a priest. Even the secondary priest who chiefly stands for another must himself have a measure of priestly self-sacrifice, if he is to do any priestly work at all.

Such mediation must therefore include the suffering of the innocent for the guilty. That which is the living power of all our own rescue work can hardly be wanting in the divine. But here we must pause to get our meaning clear. Suffering for the guilty may be for their benefit, but cannot be in their stead. In a very rough and inaccurate way it may be said that the rescuer toils and sorrows instead of the rescued, for without that toil and sorrow there could be no rescue. He toils and sorrows, and the guilty escapes toil and sorrow; and if that were all, the rescuer might be said to suffer in his stead. But the one toil and sorrow has little likeness to the other, except that it is a consequence of the same sin. There is not much relation of quantity between them; and in quality they differ entirely. A man cannot bear instead of another more than some of the physical consequences of his evil-doing. He may give up time or trouble or money to set them right for him, but he cannot take on him the bad health which it may cause; far less the sense of guilt and weakening of character which it certainly will cause. His troubles,

however great, are different in character from those of the guilty. Least of all can he take upon himself the condemnation which right-minded men must pronounce on the wrong-doer, and cannot pronounce on another. If this be vicarious suffering, then vicarious suffering is common; but in any case vicarious punishment is pure injustice, and vicarious guilt pure nonsense.

To give a concrete illustration: there are various objections good or bad to the general belief of the Christians that Jesus of Nazareth died for us, in the sense of for our benefit (*ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*, as always in the New Testament). But if we set these aside for a moment, there are further objections to the particular belief of some Christians, that he died in our stead (*ἀντὶ ἡμῶν*, which is never found in the New Testament[1]), and these further objections are not simply difficulties which might be explained, but sheer confusions of thought which no explanation can remove. If then there be mediation for men, it must be generally for their benefit; and we cannot say that it is in their stead, except in the very inaccurate way we have indicated.

At this point two great questions rise before us—questions of the utmost difficulty, but questions which we cannot put aside. If we cannot answer them we can at any rate find the limits of our knowledge, and see whether Natural Theology points towards one answer rather than another. Indications that are far from con-

[1] Mt. xx 28: *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν* is no real exception, for the *ἀντὶ* belongs to the metaphor of ransom, and will not bear any more precise meaning.

clusive in themselves may still enable us to say that one theory has a better *a priori* position than another.

Will then the mediation be singular or plural? Will it be one priest acting for mankind, or many priests acting for men? Certainly the latter. It rests on a broad analogy, presents no evident difficulties, and cannot in any case be dispensed with. The second Isaiah's conception, if it be rightly given as that of an ideal Israel the Servant of the Lord, whose sufferings were for the healing of the nations, is not untrue to human nature. Such a mediation might or might not be sufficient, and as a matter of fact it might be untrue; but we could not say beforehand that a divine plan might not take some such form. But given a class of mediators, the question may still be asked, whether such class can be summed up in an individual historically representing its ideal. If such an individual be possible, he would seem to represent the idea of mediation more perfectly than a number of mediators.[1] It is not divine power that he would need, but a perfect manhood in perfect sympathy with everything divine, and therefore with everything in man but sin—though he would understand even sin better by resistance to it than other men by experience of it.[2] Besides this, the spirit which

[1] This is St. Paul's argument, Gal. iii 19, that the double mediation of angels and Moses is inferior to that of Christ just because it is double.

[2] This is very clearly put by the writers of the New Testament. Though the mediator is represented as a divine Person, the work of mediation is always connected with his perfect manhood. The mediator is (1 Tim. ii 5) a man, Christ Jesus. It is the Son of Man (Mark ii 10) who has authority on earth to forgive sins, the Son of Man (Mark xiii 26), who comes to judgment, the Son of Man (John vi 27) who gives the bread of life. The Person is divine, but the work is always human.

would have to animate the class of mediators must in any case be accounted for, and may perhaps be most easily accounted for as the reflection of some one supreme example, such as the Buddha or the Christ. But if Natural Theology seems to point more or less in this direction, it also raises difficulties which it cannot solve. From the standpoint of Natural Theology it is not easy to see how the work of any one man could have the universal significance and universal power that is needed for such a work. For this purpose he would seem to require some deeper organic connexion with his fellow-men than can be allowed to a man who is no more than one among others. But when we come to such a conception as this we get beyond the scope of Natural Theology, and must leave the further discussion of it to the alleged special revelations, premising only that Natural Theology leaves the question open. Upon the whole, a class of mediators working with self-sacrificing energy certainly seems required; but on such considerations as we have before us we cannot venture to decide whether they will each be an independent centre of rescue, or whether they may not all draw their energies from the personal influence of some one supreme and central mediator.

The other question is likewise difficult, and closely connected with one that cannot well be asked on grounds of Natural Theology. So we must note carefully what it is. It is not whether the reversal of sin will require self-sacrifice on God's part, but simply whether Natural Theology has anything to say on the possibility of such self-sacrifice as is ascribed to him by some religions.

The first question involves things so evidently beyond us that it can hardly be asked without presumption; but the second is quite within our reach. We are not concerned with the fact, if fact it be, of self-sacrifice on God's part, but with its possibility, and with that only in a general way, without reference to any particular form it may be supposed to have taken.

There can be no self-sacrifice without freedom to act, and goodness to inspire the action. The idea is therefore unmeaning to those who think of God in terms of necessary law, and impious to those who make inscrutable power the chief attribute of deity. Thus Islam has always rejected it with abhorrence: and Western Christendom has never been able to reconcile a fundamental belief that God is power with a fundamental fact that So God loved the world. Indeed the belief and the fact are flatly contradictory, and cannot be held together in clear and full consciousness of both. Whichever of them we choose to guide our thought, the other must be suppressed if it is not to become a disturbing force, and the more disturbing and confusing the more clearly we apprehend it. Very commonly the Christian fact has been subordinated to the Muslim belief; but it has never ceased to influence even those degraded forms of Christian thought which without formally denying it practically tolerate it only as an occasional eccentricity of the mystics.

Setting aside such meaningless conceptions of God as inscrutable power or necessary law, we fall back on that of perfect rightness and perfect goodness. We might ourselves be slow to suggest that the reversal of sin may

require self-sacrifice on God's part; but others have suggested it before us, and there is much evidence that their belief is not to be summarily declared incredible. Consider first the peculiar dignity which man may claim in virtue of that likeness to God without which all thought would be futile—a dignity further indicated by the vastness and complexity of the evolution leading up to him. On a far grander scale of space and time, it reminds us of the stately march of Rome to the empire of the world—

Tantæ molis erat, Romanam condere gentem.

Next consider the wreck and ruin man has brought on himself and on the world by going aside and creating sin. Then listen to the voice of conscience that God is not an idle spectator of the deadly strife that bids fair to wreck the work of the ages. And if such a crisis as this has never arisen before in the earth's long history, there is nothing incredible in the assertion of some religions that he has dealt with it by means he never used before.

But how far can Natural Theology tell us beforehand what these means may be? Is there a charm in earth or heaven that can touch the roots of sin? Omnipotence has none. The tempest and the earthquake and the fire will pass in vain before us. They may rend the mountains and break the rocks in pieces, but they will never touch the heart of man. Personal influence would seem to be the only power that can do this,—at any rate it is the only power we ever see doing it, and the only power we can seriously imagine capable of doing it. If the ways of rescue are almost as various as the

ways of error, they all come back to this. But the personal influence that brings back the wanderer is the charm of winning goodness; and there is no goodness without unwavering loyalty to right and stern self-sacrifice in loving toil. We can do no good to others but at the cost of something to ourselves. If virtue goes out of us, we shall know it: and the more goes out of us, the more we are likely to feel it. Nor can we do any real good even to ourselves without self-sacrifice. If life lies chiefly in relations to others, all selfishness being disregard of those relations is so much weakness and lowering of true vitality. Where does the pulse of life beat higher than in the man who perils it for others, and lays it down if need be in the proud assurance that it has not been lived in vain? And this need and joy of self-sacrifice is no result of imperfection, but flows from the very nature of man as man standing in relation to God and man. As one said in the olden time, He that loveth his life is destroying it: and he that hateth his life in this world, to life eternal shall he keep it safe. The first clause at all events is profoundly true, whatever we may think of the second.

But if self-sacrifice is the law for man as man, and therefore as the image of God, can we extend it to God himself? I must confess that I for one dare no such thing without some clearer warrant than we can get from Natural Theology; but if others have done it, neither can I say on grounds of Natural Theology that they are wrong.[1] There is a good deal that seems to

[1] John Caird, *Gifford Lecture*, 157. If man cannot be explained without ascribing to his nature a divine element, it follows that the

point in this direction; and so far as I can see, nothing clearly forbids it but a view of the divine which is plainly unsound. The highest ideal we can form of joy is not the monotonous bliss of self-centred perfection, but the perfection of self-sacrifice. If there is no more toil in the ideal state, it is only because the toil is transfigured into the joy of willing service; and if there is no more sorrow, the reason is that we no longer run counter to the order of things; but the order of things expressing God's nature may still require self-sacrifice in all moral beings from the lowest to the highest.

If God has limited the undefined possibilities of omnipotence, first by giving properties to matter which he will not break through, then by giving freedom to men which he will not overrule by force, there is nothing of itself incredible in the idea that he may have limited them a third time and more narrowly by some further act of self-sacrifice for the recovery of the world's true order from the sin which is overthrowing it.

Suppose then some of the alleged revelations were to present certain historic facts as evidence of self-sacrifice on God's part for the reversal of sin. We might very well join issue that the facts were false, or that they would not bear the inference; but the idea that God might possibly act in this way is entirely true to the known order of things. By the highest of all examples it would set the seal of heaven on that unselfishness which is the true life of men; by the highest of all

divine nature cannot be understood without ascribing to it a human element. A relation cannot be essential on one side and only accidental or arbitrary on the other.

assurances it would give us the absolute and final certainty of God's goodness for which the deepest needs of human nature cry; and with the mightiest of all motives it would offer to common men that strength of moral purpose which so few can win from science or philosophy. Whether it be false or true in fact, the idea is at least profoundly true to everything we know of life, and everything we know of man.

There is one thing more to add. Would not such a revelation be reasonable and consistent if it summed up all ethics in true thankfulness for such supreme assurance? And no thankfulness is true unless it fills our hearts and guides our life; mere words are nothing. We know its power in common life to lift us above our baser selves. So far and so long as a man is genuinely thankful he cannot be anything else than true and pure and unselfish. Might not such a revelation quite reasonably declare that in thankfulness for such a benefit as this, if only it be real, there is a power strong enough to overcome the spirit of rebellion?

LECTURE IX.

POSSIBLE METHODS OF REVELATION.

II.

We may get an instructive light on the whole question by taking it for awhile from the other side, asking not so much what God is likely to give as what man seems to need. Taking him then as we find him, in a state of rebellion against the order of things, and subject to the three great evils of ignorance, guilt, and division thereupon ensuing, we ask what sort of outward helps may be needed to give him the possibility of peace with the order of things, and specially with himself and with his fellow-men. The possibility only, because omnipotence itself can give him no more. If his will is forced, he becomes a machine instead of a man; and if it is not, he can always insist on going his own bad way.

These needs of human nature may be studied either in the average man, who is the easier object lesson for us, or in the best man, who feels them more acutely, and may be supposed to know more of their meaning. But either way will bring us to nearly the same result; for even genius, in religion as elsewhere, cannot do more than see clearly what common men see more or less obscurely. Taking then the average man as our most

convenient guide—for popular religion has always been much of a muchness in all countries—the first thing we notice is his want of practical self-confidence. He is not generally wanting in some sort of religious feeling good or bad, for comparatively few succeed in getting entirely rid of it; but he shrinks from a direct approach to the divine, and tries to shelter himself behind somebody he supposes to be on better terms with heaven than he is himself. His cry is always, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. What he wants is a prophet, to speak for God to him—not necessarily or even chiefly to foretell the future, though he is glad of this too—but to tell him with authority the meaning of the present in its relation to unseen powers, or in the higher religions, in its relation to a living God. Such authority he may suppose given by outside credentials; but he is not unlikely to see more and more clearly that the moral or intrinsic authority of a holy life is more fundamental and less easily discredited by scandals and intellectual doubts: In short, he needs a man who can light up the obscure leadings of his conscience by telling him more exactly what he ought to do, or rather what he ought to be; for if the lower religions largely deal in works of law, the higher point with increasing urgency to character as the only thing in man which can have any moral value.

Again, the average man is never quite at ease with himself. He may obscure his conscience by excess, or harden himself against it, or deaden it by simple neglect; or he may try to reason himself out of it, and even boast that he does not know what it means; but neither the

practical nor the intellectual method of getting rid of it is quite successful. However he may banish the dread spectre of remorse from common life, he never knows when or with what awful power it may return. So he usually keeps on terms with religion; and even where men do not, the women do. Yet here again he shrinks from direct relations with the divine, and seeks the mediation of those who seem more worthy than himself to speak with heaven. Strange and varied rites of sacrifice bear witness in all ages to the terrible power over him of this consciousness of sin, and to his inability to overcome it for himself. We scarcely hear of "the efficacy of repentance," except from the Deists; and modern science has thrown a lurid light on the indelible consequences of our evil doings. Sacrificing priests are found in most religions, and have crept into some which like Christianity originally had none. Yet the priests are only men a little better or may be a little worse than the worshippers, and their ceremonies are sometimes immoral, often irrational, always arbitrary in having no true relation to sin. Even if the sacrifices be supposed to remove the guilt of particular sins, the need of repeating them is proof enough that they cannot touch the roots of sin. The man he needs to speak for him to God is, if it be possible, a priest of a better sort, not constituted by custom or by positive law, but by personal character, for no common sinner can be supposed to do effectually what these conventional sacrifices only do in a limited and superficial way.

These two needs are conspicuous in history, and most religions have aimed at the ideals corresponding to them.

A third which is no less real, though less prominent in past ages, seems likely to be more and more distinctly recognized in the future. The average man is not quite unconscious of his deep estrangement from his fellow-men. He may get on with his neighbours, and even with his kinsmen at the ends of the earth; though we hear of class divisions and family quarrels, and have ample experience that the closest of all ties has no charm that cannot be broken by bitter hatred. Still less are nations united. The very links of commerce, religion, and general intercourse that bring them together are turned into occasions for quarrels. The civilized world has not quite outgrown the old heathen feeling that the stranger is an enemy, and that coloured people at any rate are made to be plundered by their betters. The official declarations have always been edifying, from the days of Henry VII and Ferdinand of Aragon to the last Russian manifesto, and I will not venture to say that there is no truth at all in them; but none the less the great powers of Europe are little better than robbers on the watch, all armed to the teeth, most of them coveting pieces of their neighbour's territory, and all but England intent on strangling their neighbour's commerce with protective tariffs. His prosperity is so much insult to them; and they will sooner do themselves harm than not do harm to him. Nothing but selfish fears keep some of them from trying to stamp out their rivals entirely, or—what seems the modern ideal of glory—to "destroy their material and moral resources," as the Germans put it, by ruinous indemnities, commercial restrictions, and financial receiverships. We have come back in a very

civilized way to the Red Indian war cry, Let us go and eat up that nation.

This is truth; but it is not the whole truth, nor even I think the most significant part of the truth. It is only blood and iron—a survival of the barbarian's mailed fist. It is not the power of the future. Though the nations hate each other more actively than they did half a century ago, there is more unity among them, and more consciousness of unity. Commerce is international, so is thought, and so is civilization generally; so that civilized people all over the world are growing more like each other in manners, in administration, and in ways of thinking. Even Japan is not now so very unlike Europe.[1] The forces of the future make for unity, and are seen to make for unity. The value of the individual, which is our great inheritance from the nineteenth century, gave new value to the nations in which he is grouped; but it implies even more the unity of mankind, and nothing less than an Armageddon of the nations utterly shattering civilization can prevent that unity from more and more asserting itself and seeking some visible form. I agree with Mr. Wells that civilized states in course of time will come to have some unity of government; but a trade union of plotting engineers is only a vulgar conspiracy of the South American sort. Even a Samurai class would be no better. Unless all history bears false witness, no one class can be trusted to use absolute power in any interest but its own. If the Samurais were all saints to begin with, they would soon be mostly sinners. Can we see no worthier ideal

[1] This was written before the war.

on the far horizon of a better age than ours? Is no nobler issue conceivable for the great historic evolution of the higher from the lower, of unity through diversity?

There have been few more impressive scenes in history than the cry which rang one Christmas morning through St. Peter's church at Rome,—CAROLO AUGUSTO, A DEO CORONATO, MAGNO ET PACIFICO IMPERATORI, VITA ET VICTORIA. There is a truth we have not exhausted yet in the ideal of the Holy Roman Empire. Premature it was in those rude times, when even the nations were not in being, whose diversities are needed to form a true unity; but it remains none the less a parable for all ages. Karl the Great had to begin by getting a whole code of law and morals into the oath of fealty; but it is not the distinctive office of a king to make laws. That in civilized states he best leaves his people to do for themselves, for the effective sanction of a law is not in his command, but in the general recognition of its rightness. Eastern kings are despots, and Western kings have often been generals and nothing more; but the Teutonic king from the first embodied the unity of his people, and to that highest function he seems now returning. If Germany is a great exception, the reason is that notwithstanding her splendid organization, her constitutional development is behind the Tudor stage. But the ideal king, if we may imagine him possible, is constituted neither by a false pretence of divine right, nor by an intrigue of Polish nobles, nor by a lying *plébiscite*, nor even by a regular and lawful Act of Settlement, but by some such intrinsic and unquestioned force of character as we see in founders of religions. Indeed, we can

hardly imagine a true king of men without a good deal of the prophet in him, and peradventure something also of the priest, for the archaic thought was not mistaken which ruled that the king of Salem must also be priest of the most high God. Just as philosophy had to take up some of the functions of religion in the evil days which followed Alexander, so the church was obliged to take up some of the duties of the state in the evil days we call the Middle Ages; and now that the state is taking back its rightful work, the cry is raised for separation. Such cry does not always come from the encroaching section of the church or the irreligious part of the state; but the separation would be a clear step backward, and at best an unavoidable calamity to both. It may suit the dualism of good and evil which counts the church holy and the state profane; but the true ideal of the future is their close alliance in some form higher and more spiritual than the old one, even if it should prove that our unhappy divisions make us unworthy even to maintain such union as we have already.

If you say that I am influenced here as elsewhere by Christian hope, I will not deny it. I cannot forswear that spirit of hope which is the breath of life in every Christian man; but I submit that the hope which is specifically Christian is also generically theistic. It seems implied in every sort of Theism, though in its Christian form it is more definite and confident, because it claims assurance from certain alleged historical facts to which I am no way now appealing. On purely theistic grounds, I do not see how any serious person can refuse to allow that the Christians have a good deal

of reason for their sure and certain hope, that the all-ruling God who has guided the world-wide evolution hitherto will not stay his onward course in future ages till its last ideal has been made real, in this life or another, before the face of living men. The only question he can raise is whether that ideal is rightly stated.

It is a far-off goal, a goal our children and our children's children will not live to see: but it is none the less the goal towards which the long course of history seems pointing. It is none the worse for being the Christian ideal, if it is also—as I think it is—the ideal suggested by a broad survey of the facts of the world and of the needs of human nature in its present state. And the ideals which rise above practical politics are the powers of the future. We are all agreed, except the pessimists, that some uplifting force is working in the world. Whether we call it divine or not, no others will dispute the action of such a force in geological and in historic times; and no Theist will feel it safe to place limits on the possibilities of its future working. Nor will any ideal fairly indicated by the deepest needs of human nature seem impossible to those who measure the ages of the future by the ages of the past; and even less will those dismiss it as a dream who believe in the life after death which is postulated by every human thought and every human feeling which is not entirely bestial.

If then men could rise above their baser passions and with clear insight ask for that help which their deepest nature needs, some ideal of this kind seems to be the

thing for which they would ask. I am not saying that the natural man would ask for it, or that he would welcome it if it came to him. Much the reverse. He bids the prophets prophesy smooth things, and expects the priests to soothe his conscience with stately rituals and all the husks of outward worship, while to the king his cry is not, Do right between us, but Avenge me of mine adversary. It is doubtless a strange and horrible thing when "the prophets prophesy lies, and my people love to have it so"; but it is not an uncommon thing. The bitterest of haters are the men who know or more than half suspect that they are hating truth. Did not Plato tell us that if ever the perfect man appeared he was sure to be crucified? The persecutor is never a lover of truth; he is always a hater of truth, either because he knows it to be true, or because he cannot bear the thought that it may prove true. Yet the men who killed the prophets will often build their tombs. Deeper than they know is the appeal which blood has sealed. All religions are rooted in something deeper than the conscious thought of men, and all religions point more or less in the direction of the ideal I have laid before you, while the highest religions point to it more clearly than others. And if this ideal truly corresponds to our deepest needs, we may not unreasonably hope that a God who cares enough for men to give them any sort of revelation will not refuse in one way or another, at one time or another, in one world or another, to satisfy the highest aspirations of the nature he has given them.

By whatever method it may please God to deal with

sin, we are bound on all principles of Theism to believe that he will not fail sooner or later to deal with it effectively. This means first that he is able so to deal with it. Otherwise we could not trust him, and all thought (including this) would be idle fancy. But more precisely, what does it mean? Were sin illusion, as it is in pantheistic and some other systems, it would suffice for him to lift the vail of sense and shew us the truth *sub specie æternitatis*. But if conscience is real, sin is real too. Again, if evil were no more than ripening good, sin might be left to grow into something better. But here again the witness of conscience is clear, that sin is not an undeveloped form of good, but a direct contradiction of that which is divine. It is rebellion against an order which God has established, not as an arbitrary law which might have been otherwise, but as the expression and revelation of his nature to us; so that such rebellion resembles rather a personal attack on the sovereign than a common breach of law which need not come directly under his notice. To use an old phrase, we make him a liar when we act as if what pleases us were better than the law which he sets before us in the order of things. This deeper and truer view of sin was rightly given, though in a distorted way, by the old argument that every offence against an infinite Person is infinite, and deserves infinite punishment. If then we do wrong with our eyes open or wilfully shut, we are not as it were committing a petty breach of the peace, but flatly saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

Now if this is the true meaning of sin, it follows that

God's relation to it must be one of absolute enmity. He may tolerate it for a time, or use it as a means of training for us in spite of itself, but in the end he must conquer it. There is no alternative. Either God will conquer sin, or sin will conquer God. Therefore even now he is doing everything to combat it, short of uncreating man by taking away the freedom which is needed to make good real as well as evil. The natural order still speaks to us of beauty and of lavish goodness, after all that men have done to disfigure and corrupt it; the moral order in all the relations of life does not cease to preach truth and tenderness and mercy, after all that sinners have done to make it a school of selfishness and vice; and the terrors of conscience in God's name watch over all our goings. It is not the gate of paradise but that of hell which is

> With dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms.

But though the flaming sword shall mark the sinner as he passes in, not all the host of heaven can bar the downward road.

Here is the trial of our faith. He that will go the way of death, go he must, and onward to the end, for sin too must work out its results in this world or another to the uttermost. So long as he chooses to go that way, no power in earth or heaven can stop him by force, in this world or another. It is not a matter of difficulty which power might be supposed great enough to overcome, but a self-contradiction before which omnipotence itself is impotent. The great white throne, the opened books, the formal sentence of the day of doom—all these

cannot be more than signs and parables of something more august and awful still. The decision will not be some day launched upon us like the lightning from on high, for here and now the moral order is compelling us day by day to spell it out with unrelenting truth. It is our own choice, and we are ourselves the books of record: and even if the lips that speak it are divine they can only declare that which we ourselves have written. In this world Nature has no forgiveness. She punishes one sin with another, and pursues it to the bitter end. And she knows of none hereafter. Remorseless and inflexible as ever, she faces without a qualm the furthest ages of the future to pronounce her final word of doom—He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.

Here then the most tremendous of all moral difficulties rises to confront us, like some grim and terrible spirit from

> The dark unbottomed infinite abyss.

If only we can hold our ground at this point the victory of faith is won, for in this last great strife all others are summed up. But intellect is powerless here, imagination fails, and only faith remains. If we had that divine and surer word of which Plato speaks, there might be much to confirm it in the world around us. Could we be assured that there is one that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, our flesh might rest in hope. But there are no such assurances as these in Natural Theology. The question is not simply of such forgiveness as man can give, which is simply one more force working in the world for good, but of

unravelling the whole tangle of misery which sin has wrought upon this earth of ours. It seems impossible to suppose that perfect goodness will rest content with less than this.

There is some confusion of thought in the reply commonly made here, that as seeds are wasted in nature, so may men be wasted. This means that a seed is "wasted" if it becomes food for birds or insects or simply enriches the ground where it falls, instead of growing up into a plant; and the argument is that men may be similarly "wasted" instead of growing up into such higher state as some religions promise them. But some seeds do grow into plants; if then this argument were valid, we should conclude that some men (though only some) might reach the higher state. It would concede something, though not what we are contending for. However, it is not valid. It assumes that man is a purely physical being. The seed is a means to an end, and the end may as well be the bird or the insect as the plant; and man *qua* physical may very well come to similar ends. But the image of God in man cannot be simply a means like the seed. It must be an end in itself, the one true end of the entire cycle; and it cannot miss its higher growth unless the evolution of the ages which led up to it is a failure, and therefore a delusion.

For it is further to be noted that a personal God cannot be supposed to view the universe only in a general way as we do. We know men only in classes, and only recognize an individual when class-marks enough meet in him. But God must know the in-

dividual directly, and have an individual use and meaning for him in the general plan, so that such general plan cannot be carried out unless the individual plan is carried out along with it. If indeed we could imagine some men no more than supernumeraries, the general plan might be fully carried out without regard to them; but in a divine plan the superfluous is as incredible as the defective.

If sin is a mystery, its reversal is a deeper mystery; yet if it is never to be reversed, the confusion will be as final as if there were no God at all. Hard as it is for mortal weakness even to imagine how this thing can be, it is flatly unthinkable that sin shall have the final victory. The one is no more than an unfathomed mystery which may be true, the other a contradiction in terms which cannot but be false. The one impossibility which overrides all others is that any perversity of created beings should finally defeat the purpose of all-enduring patience and all-sovereign goodness.

That purpose plainly rises far above the highest flights of human thought. The majestic evolution of the ages on this earth of ours cannot be more than a tiny fragment of a scheme of right and goodness that must reach outward from the crumblings of atoms to the building of the mightiest star that walks the frozen verge of heaven, and forward from beyond the furthest past which the astronomer can discern to beyond the furthest future which the prophet can divine. Yet if our theistic faith is not illusion we have some true knowledge of the eternal purpose; and we can but bear

witness of the best our God has given us to know. With all reserve then—God pardon human ignorance and rashness—the perfect victory of perfect goodness would seem finally to require the willing submission of all moral beings in the universe. Great as the difficulties are, especially from the standpoint of the Christians, who take so serious a view of sin, they are no way lessened if we suppose that God will annihilate the sinners, or shut up hardened and impenitent rebels in hell for ever. Nor is there much gained by the theory that the penalty for the misuse of free will is the deprivation of it, so that the sinners will hereafter do right, but only as machines. This too would seem a confession that freedom is a failure. But from the Christian point of view the point is rather that the punishment is sure and certain, terrible and irretrievable, than that it has no end. May there not even be a fallacy in the question whether it has an end or not, if the state we call eternal is not a state of space and time? All that we can do is to hold on for very life to the theistic faith without which all thought is idle, and rest in sure and certain hope that as God is God, perfect goodness in the end must have its perfect victory, and the love that beareth all things must also be the love that overcometh all things.

At this point we may do well to pause. We have traced something like an outline of the form in which a revelation is likely to be given; and though my own belief is that Natural Theology would carry us a little further, it may be safer to stop here and leave you to judge for yourselves how far our work has been well

done. If I have taken hints and borrowed phrases from all quarters, I have worked on grounds of reason only, and scrupulously avoided anything like an appeal to an alleged miracle in proof of anything, though sometimes it has been worth while to point out what would follow if such miracle were true. How that is Christian I have expressed only so far as it seems involved in Theism generally; and in our examination of doctrines that are Christian we have limited ourselves to such of them as can conveniently be discussed without raising the historical question of the truth of particular miracles. The problems, however, that come next are full of meaning, and some of them as urgent as any that we have touched already. For instance, even those who are most firmly convinced that the Christian claim on behalf of Jesus of Nazareth is false can hardly dispute that if there is any doubt at all, it lays on us the most solemn duty to use all our powers of heart and soul and mind in the endeavour to clear it up. Whether that claim be true or false in fact, no condemnation can be too severe for the man who snatches at the first excuse for accepting or rejecting it. Right or wrong, he is gambling with truth.

It may be that our position would have been strengthened if we had seen our way to go further. As a matter of history, the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man have not gone well together. One of the two ideas tends to exclude the other. Either God absorbs man in Pantheism, or man banishes God in Deism. Either man is wholly subject to some universal law, or he stands out in the godless isolation

of that which is right in his own eyes.[1] There is no escape from the dilemma, unless God and man are joined by some true affinity which destroys their mutual exclusiveness. Such an affinity is found by the philosophical doctrine that there is a spark of the divine in man; and it might have been worth while to ask whether the Christian doctrine of an incarnation does not put the philosophical in its strongest form, and if so, whether this may not be a presumption in its favour.

Or suppose we had taken the full doctrine that Christ is on one side the eternal and sufficient object of the Father's love, and on another the archetype of man, the ground of the natural and the organic head of the spiritual order. Such a conception involves difficulties, may be some serious difficulties; but if it be supposed true, it certainly throws a flood of light on such various questions as God's independence of the world, the harmony of transcendence and immanence, the revelation of the eternal in things of time, the meaning and possibilities of human nature, and the sufficiency of one who was man to fulfil the highest needs and aspirations of mankind. This last, if I am not mistaken, is more than almost any other a question which needs closer attention than is commonly given to it in current literature even on the Christian side, for I am

[1] Andrew Seth (Pringle Pattison), *Hegelianism and Personality*, 162. Both philosophy and religion bear ample testimony to the almost insuperable difficulty of finding room in the universe for God *and* man. When speculation busies itself with the relation of these two, each in turn tends to swallow up the other. The pendulum of human thought swings continually between the two extremes of Individualism, leading to Atheism, and Universalism, leading to the Pantheism or Akosmism.

not saying this as a fling at opponents. Assuming the very highest view of his divinity, I still cannot see my way to account for moral influence which only grows as ages pass, unless he stands in a closer relation to individuals than professing Christians have commonly realized. In any case, the question needs attention.

Or take the doctrine of the Trinity, not as a conundrum of the dogmatists, but as the expression of a belief that divine life as well as human has a social element. Is not such a belief the most emphatic of protests that all relations whatever imply duties on both sides? If God himself is not arbitrary, the existence of despotism or slavery on earth must stand condemned. A God whose relations are as binding for himself as for his creatures is neither the inscrutable Emptiness of the Agnostic and the Pantheist nor the inscrutable Power of the Muslim and the Latin, but a living Father to his erring children. This is the real meaning of the decision at Nicæa. The divine ideal set forth by Athanasius was never quite forgotten in the Middle Ages; and it gives the august sanction of divine example to that broad sense of mutual duty which is the first necessity of civilized society.

Or take the most distinctive of all Christian doctrines —that of Christ in us and us in Christ. Some will answer that it is mystic, as indeed it is, and for that reason summarily reject it; but let us put the supposition that it may be true. There can be no question that it accounts at once for many things that greatly need to be accounted for. Many faiths have inspired noble characters—far be it from me to count any doer

of truth an alien from the Church of God—many have diffused religion after their kind through all ranks of men or every act of life, and some have guided nations with little change for centuries. But low religions can shew lofty characters, low religions can pervade life, low religions can cry their *Semper eadem*. It is neither intensity nor diffusion nor permanence, but the combination of the three, and all in so high degree, which makes Christianity unique in history; and for this combination as well as for its moral purity the unbeliever is as much bound as the believer to find serious and sufficient causes. The author of the mightiest moral force we know in history and life must have at the lowest a very eminent and special place as a man among men, and I find no consideration of Natural Theology which forbids the higher view of him held by Christians; but the positive evidence they offer for it is too closely connected with alleged miraculous facts to be disentangled from them by any criticism that is reasonable. If we undertook to cut out the miraculous element from the Gospels we should have to cut out nearly all the rest as inseparable from it, and might come to a remainder as meagre as Schmiedel's nine genuine sayings of Jesus, though it would be surprising if any fair-minded man selected those nine.

As we must not raise the historical question of miracles there is but one thing more to say at this point. As I look back on history, and on my own forty years of a student's quiet life, the thing that overawes me is not the increase of knowledge but the widening of the outlook and the quickening of the pulse of life.

On all sides we see the partial theories crowded out, the partial questions melting into universals, as if the whole field of human knowledge were being levelled for some final contest. Polytheism is a survival, and the old dualism of good and evil is now untenable. Deism is forgotten, Materialism is discredited, Agnosticism is going the same way, and the choice that now remains is between some form of Theism and the iron yoke of a pantheistic necessity. But Theism has never ruled a nation except in its Christian form, and we may be certain that it never will. A few of the elect may live by logic, but common mortals cannot do without feeling. It is a deeper thing than reasoning, and nearly always overcomes it when the two conflict together. Human nature cries aloud for a living God who gives us some assurance of his love, a God at whose feet we may find our true self in a knowledge which is life and a service which is perfect freedom. The Determinist may answer that human nature is in a state of total depravity; but in any case the fact remains—and it must be a fact of weighty meaning—that human nature turns to a religion of feeling as surely as the needle turns to the north, and in some such religion seeks to satisfy this its deepest need: and of such religions, Christianity seems the highest. Judaism may be tenable, if it be taken in the old way, as resting on historical assurances of God's goodness, and as no more than provisional, till Messias comes "who shall tell us all things." If it is not so taken, it becomes a very ordinary sort of Unitarianism: and Unitarianism is always in unstable equilibrium. It can speak of God,

and it can speak of man; but it cannot firmly link the two together. Each in turn swallows up the other. On one side is the deistic phase where God is all and man is nothing; and this endangers the image of God in man, without which experience can have no rational meaning. On the other is the pantheistic version, that man is as necessary to God as God to man: and this is destructive of all religion. These are the Scylla and Charybdis of Unitarianism, and no safe course between has yet been found. We may be thankful for the efforts of men like Martineau and Harnack to see in Jesus of Nazareth assurance as well as preaching of the Fatherhood of God without confessing his divinity. This is much; but no mere child of man can be the everlasting link we need. The sovereign claim of God to human trust will never be fully vindicated till His right and goodness are no longer viewed as attributes of power, but made the eternal ground of everything divine, and an eternal assurance of this is found in facts which are facts of the eternal world as well as facts of time.

Christianity is at least logical, for the link it finds belongs as much to the eternal world as to that of time. But it stands or falls by its Founder's claim to be divine as well as human, and the more profoundly natural for being something more than natural in the narrow sense. You may accept that claim or you may reject it; but you cannot compromise it. Half measures like Arianism are folly. Whatever the difficulty may be, it must be thoroughly dealt with, not glossed over. It may be that living power is not needed to account

for the facts; but if it is, a theory which fails to provide it is self-condemned as insufficient. Whether you are moving towards belief or unbelief, there is no rest in the halting half and half theories which look for living power to a purely human Christ who never rose with power from the dead. Some day possibly the research of the learned will discover some truer and better link between the eternal and the things of time; but until that is done (if we can seriously expect such a thing) there are but two self-consistent and so far tenable positions. You may worship Christ, or you may seat Necessity upon the throne of God, and worship that.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

(SECOND COURSE OF LECTURES.)

LECTURE X.

PRIMITIVE RELIGION.

I.

Now that we have formed by the light of Natural Theology the best idea we can of what revelation will be, we have still to review historically the conceptions men have formed of what it has been. The task is one of enormous range and complexity, for the conception of revelation is in mathematical language a function of many variables. The ideas indeed of God and man which chiefly determine it are so closely related that either might be inferred without risk of any great error from the other; but they are both influenced together and in much the same way by all the forces that act on the moral state of men, like their knowledge of nature, their social and political condition, and the varied circumstances of individual life. As the religion, whatever it be, directly and indirectly shapes the life of

men in all its relations, so also that life reacts on the religion, and shapes the conception of revelation. A morally great or mean life, national or individual, tends to a great or a mean idea of God and man, and therefore to a great or a mean conception of revelation; and any influence which raises or debases life will also raise or debase the others, so that a full discussion of the conception of revelation would be a full discussion of the history of human life. We shall find it as much as we can do to trace the merest outline, marking out some of the main lines of development, but not attempting to give more than a rough chart even of these.

If all true thought retraces God's thought, all religions must be his revelation, so far as they are true. However elementary the truth may be, however great the errors men connect with it, truth is still divine. It may be no more than that there is a power kindred to us though unseen, with whom we can live and ought to live on terms of trust and friendliness. This is not much of a creed; but it contains the essentials of religion. Here is faith, that such a power is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him—for *him* it must be, whenever the conception of faith is fairly thought out. Here is morality, for this belief binds me to do some things as right and to forbear others as wrong without regard to selfish ends. Here is trust, which is in germ the perfect love that casteth out fear. And here is communion, not only with that power but with my fellows, for kinship to me is kinship to my clan, and joins us all in common duties. This trustful sense of common duty to an unseen but kindred power seems the

least which can be called religion; and the history of religion is the unfolding of this conception in its age-long struggle with the alien and intruding power of magic.

Before we go further we must get clear the difference between magic and religion, for there has always been a good deal of confusion. Magic then or art-magic resembles religion in dealing with unseen powers, so that it is entirely distinct from what is called sympathetic magic. This last is not properly magic at all, but the science of the savage, by which he tries to bring rain, make the crops grow, or do other things which he believes he can do himself. This may be crude science; but there can be no question of either magic or religion till he comes to things which he believes can only be done by the unseen powers. Magic may also be like religion in outward form, and sometimes even becomes religion when our relation to the unseen powers is differently conceived. The distinction is in this relation; and it is absolute. In magic we do not trust the unseen powers we are dealing with: in religion we do. Bargaining with gods is not magic, for we cannot bargain even with men unless we have some trust in them. Thus Jacob's vow is religious, though a low form of religion. We are not using magic till we endeavour to outwit or wheedle the unseen powers, or to compel them by the terror of some power supposed to be greater than theirs. In short, we are not trusting them: we believe only that they will do what we make them do. But the natural man does not care to serve the gods for nought: so he mixes up magic with religion

till he forgets the difference, and puzzles whole schools of philosophers and archæologists. Thus the proposal to measure scientifically the value of prayer by its results in one ward of a hospital depends on a complete confusion of religion with magic. It must be allowed that there was a good deal of authority for supposing the conception of prayer to be a sort of spiritual artillery—the more pieces the better—for making heaven do what we want. But the idea is in as fundamental antagonism to religion as it is to science. It is only the magic which clings to the lower forms of religion, and is rejected by the higher. We need not come up to Christianity or Plato for a repudiation of it. As low down in the scale as such a champion of theurgy and brutish idol-worships as the writer *de mysteriis Ægyptiorum*, we find a noble protest that prayer is not a means of inducing the gods to change the course of things but their own good gift of communion with them, the blessing of the living gods upon their children. To take the battery theory for religion is no better than judging science by astrology. Even if religion and magic were using the same ceremonies in much the same way, the difference of attitude to the unseen powers would make an absolute contrast between them. In magic we seek to impose our own will on those powers: in religion we are free like children to make known our needs to them, but we submit ourselves to their will.

The history of religion is long and chequered. In one direction the simple god of totemism is developed into a Babel of polytheistic invention, or still further

degraded into the malignant spirits of the savage: in another he climbs the narrow path of monotheism to become first the God of Israel, then the Lord of all the earth, and at last our heavenly Father. In a few cases it may be that spirits of the underworld who at first were evil powers became in course of time protectors of the good and arbiters of life to come. So too the conception of worship has undergone many changes, not always for the better. In one direction the rude primitive communion was developed into gifts of sacrifice and bargains with gods, or further degraded into hideous orgies of lust and blood, sometimes balanced after a fashion by morbid excesses of asceticism: in another it gradually threw off the primitive formalism of sacramental accuracy, to become more and more a reasonable service of willing and unselfish piety, such as is described for all ages in the old words, "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

The prehistoric growth of religion will not detain us long. In the first place, our knowledge of it is scanty and obscure. We find its relics; but the ideas originally connected with them are not so easy to determine. Given some things found in a burying-place: had any of them a religious meaning? If so, can we find out exactly what it was? Perhaps the question is harder than it looks. Imagine the archæologists five thousand years hence describing Christianity from the remains of its churches, all records having perished.[1] We might read, "These people were unquestionably polytheists.

[1] I owe the thought to Brace, *The Unknown God*, p. 5; but I have worked it out a little differently.

We find some differences of North and South; but everywhere the chief gods were a woman with a child, and a crucified man whose relation to them is uncertain. There are also traces of many lesser gods, of whom some are represented as put to death by violence. The idea indeed of crucifixion seems to have had a fascination for them, to judge by the form of their buildings, and the numerous crosses and crucifixes which remain. As they were fairly civilized, we can hardly suppose that they worshipped criminals. The evidence rather points to an extensive personification of natural forces in their ceaseless conflict. Thus the woman with the child may be Mother Earth, or better perhaps the Corn-maiden, while the crucified man may represent some solar myth of light overcome by the powers of darkness, and the minor gods will stand for other myths of a similar sort."

If you call this a strange account of Christianity, I quite agree with you. But if some of the archæologists have come to results of this kind in spite of records, it is not unreasonable to suppose that others might go the same way if records were lost. Perhaps we have not slandered the Christians much worse than some of us have slandered primitive man. The ideas of savages, on which archæologists depend so much for their conclusions, are hard to ascertain and hard to understand, and in any case give us no very safe clue to the ideas of primitive man. If savage life is a likeness, it must also be a caricature of primitive life, for we have to reckon with the plain fact that primitive man is as much the ancestor of civilized as of savage man. In

the matter which now concerns us he was more like civilized man, for he must have had not only the general capacity for improvement which belongs to human nature, but the particular capacity for self-improvement which the modern savage seems to have lost. This fact makes a great difference; and the only alternative is to make a greater difference by supposing that the special help which now has to come from a more civilized people was originally given straight from heaven. On either theory primitive man was not simply a savage. If he was a child in knowledge, his moral sense likewise may have been that of a child, less developed but also less perverted than in later times. His power of mind, however, must have been considerable, as we see from his inventions and his occasional artistic skill. In a word, it is not safe to assume that the ancestors of modern savages either never got beyond the state of primitive man, or else that, having got beyond it, they fell back precisely to their former state and no further. As well judge the wine by the dregs as primitive man by the savage.

Nor would the fullest knowledge of primitive religion entitle us to make it the standard of all religion. Our fathers may have done so; but we should contradict the very idea of evolution if we read the later growths in terms of the earlier. This is "going back to nature," like the Cynics and Rousseau. The key must be in the highest religions, not in the lower. As the Judaizers of the apostolic age who construed the Gospel by the Law completely misunderstood them both, so the students of our time who try to construe the higher religions

by the lower—say the Old Testament by fetishism, or the New by solar myths and human sacrifices—would seem as much mistaken as their predecessors. Archæology may be to history what palæontology is to physiology; but it cannot be very much more. If religion is in any way a subject of evolution, we shall not find its meaning in the *caput mortuum* which may remain when all religions have been well shaken together, but in some principle or other which may be scarcely traceable in the lower religions, but becomes clearer in the higher, and only reaches its full development in the highest. Such a principle is that of trust in the unseen powers.

But which are the higher, and which are the lower? What is primitive religion, and what is not? These are distinct questions, but neither of them can be settled simply by chronology. In the first place, the world was old when history begins. We cannot say how many thousand years of development lie behind the old civilization of the Euphrates valley. Again, some peoples move faster than others. India soon ran through her religion of nature, and settled down into a fairly modern pantheistic polytheism, while China is still in an almost patriarchal stage of ancestor-worship, and still has the emperor for priest of heaven. Even in one people the individual differences range upward from the lowest forms of religious thought to the highest of the time. We do not take either Marcus or Commodus as fair samples of their subjects. So too every modern country has plenty of people in all ranks of life whose notions of religion are little better than those current in West Africa. All that can be done

is to strike a sort of average, as we do in estimating national character, neglecting such baser elements as are not too obtrusive. Thus we can pass over the Mormons in England, though some account might have to be taken of them in America.

Even so, the classification of religions is not easy. Many schemes have been proposed, but there seem to be objections to all. The old classification of true and false expresses a vital difference; but the difference is not so much of religions as wholes, as of their guiding ideas, for in practice no religion is pure truth or pure falsehood. Again, the division into national and universal covers many of the facts; but Judaism and Islam form an awkward intermediate class, and Christianity is more akin to either of these than to the Buddhism which ranks as the other universal religion. There are great merits also in the distinction of monotheistic and polytheistic religions; but here again the classification is confused. Some religions are monotheistic in theory and polytheistic in recognized practice, like the old Eclecticism or modern Romanism. How are these to be classed? So also the division of religions into natural and ethical may bring out the difference of principle between magic and morality; but it gives no sharp line of demarcation. There is an ethical element in the lowest religions, and a magical clings to the highest, say in verbal inspiration or the *ex opere operato* view of sacraments. Moreover, natural and ethical is a false contrast. There is more that is ethical in the higher natural religions than in the lowest ethical. The sunny naturalism of Greece with

all its faults is on a higher moral plane than Buddhist asceticism with all its beauty. Again, the difference between founded and unfounded religions is important, and roughly answers to the "revolution" which marks the passage from the natural to the ethical. Yet even here we cannot escape questions of degree. Be his originality what it may, the founder stands in close relation to his own time, and cannot do more than reform the religion he finds. Thus Islam is made up of the Jewish, Christian, and heathen ideas which were current in Arabia. The Buddha took over the degraded Indian conception of gods—and put them aside as minor beings at best; and accepted the idea of retribution in the future—but applied it to the transmission of *karma*, instead of the transmigration of souls. Even Jesus of Nazareth "came not to destroy, but to finish" the work which the law began but was not able to carry through. A real revolution making a clean severance from the past is as impossible in religion as in politics.

If we must have a classification, the best is Hegel's, by the value assigned to the individual. In religions of mass, as he called them, the individual is lost in the society; in religions of individuality, society exists for the individual; while Christianity as the one religion of spirit proclaims at once the supreme value of the individual and the need of the society to bring him to perfection. This division answers to the historical development of religion generally. First came the objective religions, then the subjective, then those that strive to reconcile in a higher unity the ideas of both.

There is a similar development in society generally, where we pass from a rule of custom to a rule of contract, and from an age of authority to an age of liberty, from a condition where the individual is lost in the State to one where the State exists for the individual; and where we are now looking for a reconciliation between authority and liberty, State management and individual enterprise. It is the same within the limits of Christianity. First came the Catholic systems, where man was made for the Church; then the Protestant, in which the Church was made for man; and now we are feeling after something that shall give a real value to the Church consistent with the supreme value of the individual. Current thought inside and outside the churches is upon the whole moving forward to this third stage, in spite of the strong pantheistic and catholic reactions to the first which mark the second half of the nineteenth century.

The difficulty of classification is much the same with religions as in zoology. We can more easily come to a general agreement than justify it by any single character. Thus in the Mollusca, if we go by the shell only or the radula only, we shall sometimes separate allied genera;[1] and conversely, we can bring together from very different genera either similar shells[2] or a particular type of radula—arboreal[3]

[1] Thus the shell separates Limax from Euplecta, the radula Murex from Ranella.

[2] Like Helix and Natalina, Pupa and Ennea, Cæliaxis and Cylindrella.

[3] Arboreal: Rhachis, and species of Helicostyla and Amphidromus; Janella, and Achatinella (not Amastra).

or parasitic,[1] for example. In some cases the shell is misleading, in others the radula will not separate species.[2] No single character is an absolutely safe guide. So with religions: there is no single feature which will not sometimes mislead us. Still, certain features are more or less common in ancient religions, while in modern times they are chiefly found in peoples and individuals otherwise known to be backward or degraded. Even these, however, are not unerring tests, for we occasionally see flashes of high light in the lower religions, while strange survivals and superstitions in the higher bear witness to the persistent force of old beliefs. Yet even the high truths in low religions are commonly misconceived in an environment of low thought, and take the form of scandals. Thus the theory of the high places with their social religion all over the country was higher than that of the fixed and local services at Jerusalem; but of the practice the less said the better. The belief in a "feminine" element in the divine was mixed up with matters of sex, and led to such gross excesses that decent religions have always looked on it with great and just suspicion. Yet its truth is undeniable for those who confess the image of God in man, unless the "feminine" virtues are either rejected or placed in a lower class. Indeed, the fact that we count them

[1] Parasitic: Cerithiopsis, Pedicularia, Sistrum (spectrum *Rve* only, so far as my observation goes). To these may be added the curious likeness of radula between such utterly different genera as Omphalotropis and Ovula, or Urocoptis and Ancylus (only elatior *Anth.* and rhodacme *Walker*, so far as I know).

[2] Thus in the Buccinidæ the individual variation is greater than the specific; and in large genera like Clausilia and Achatinella (not Amastra) the radula of different species is often indistinguishable.

distinctively feminine is a relic of the barbarian belief that force is strength, and a clear mark of our own imperfect evolution.

For our purpose, however, we shall need no very precise classification. It will suffice to take the closely related ideas of God and man embodied in religions, for these will in the main determine the conception of the knowledge of God. The divine may be distributed through the parts of the world or lost in the world as a whole;[1] or it may stand out in clear personality as a God above the world, and perhaps also in the world. It may hardly differ from men except in power, or it may be invested with the noblest attributes of right and goodness. Likewise man may be no more than an item of some family or tribal unit; or he may be sharply distinguished as an individual person responsible for his own acts only. What is popularly called religion may aim chiefly at propitiating or outwitting vaguely conceived spirits by magical rites and ceremonies; or it may lay decisive stress on a moral relation to one personal God. It may be satisfied with an accurate performance of outward observances; or it may require a spiritual service and truth in the inward parts. It may be content with unreasoning traditionalism; or it may seek by manifestation of the truth to commend itself to all men in the sight of God.

Religions lie variously between these extremes. The lowest of them is above the ideal natural man of St. Paul, who has no sense at all of religion, while the highest fail to realize generally among men the ideal spiritual man,

[1] Or more accurately, the world may be lost in it.

in whom that sense is perfect. But in general the higher ideas cohere together, and so do the lower. If the conception of God is high, so generally is that of man, and conversely. Thus the imperfect ideas of human personality current among the ancients are reflected in imperfect conceptions of the divine; and conversely, the haze which modern Pantheism throws over the idea of God obscures and degrades the personality of man. As long as magic is stronger than science, the gods must be supposed variable in temper and weak of will; and so long as custom and tradition reign supreme, there is no free scope for moral conceptions of God and man. The one must be inscrutable power, the other either unreasoning obedience to power—which is a base religion —or else coaxing or outwitting of power—which is not religion at all. It is not by accident that since the Reformation we have had on one side a development of our idea of God by the discoveries of science, the establishment of natural law, and the overthrow of the old belief in a despot in heaven; and on the other that deepened respect for human personality which is the glory of civilized nations in our own time.

Whatever be the origin of man, no ideas in any true sense religious can have crossed his mind till he was not only equal to the higher beasts in bodily structure and social habits, but also possessed of the human reason we find in the lowest savages, and of the sense of right and wrong without which there can be no religion. We may therefore credit him from the first with gregarious habits, which indeed were necessary for his continuance, and with natural affection, which owing to his long

infancy must always have played a much larger part in human than it does in animal life. The clan was the unit, for the family was not yet, though mere animal jealousy would be enough to secure some fixity in sexual relations. Even the savage is far from destitute of moral sense. If his ideas of what ought or ought not to be done differ from ours, he is quite as clear that some things ought to be done and some ought not. Nor does he differ entirely from us as to what they are, for he will sometimes do works of human kindliness that might shame his betters; and even where the men will not, the women mostly will. Some savage tribes are treacherous to strangers, most are thievish, all excessively thoughtless and careless of human life, all liable to indefinite debasement by drink, yet it must not be forgotten that those whom necessity or choice has brought into close relations with them commonly think much better of them than passing travellers.

Primitive man must have been at least as good as this, with more capacity for improvement. He was also something of a philosopher. The fact that he did not perish is evidence enough of a sound practical faith in the uniformity of nature; and there seems to be evidence that he was not without a theory of the universe. It was very objective, and so anthropomorphic, for he appears to have ascribed all changes not caused by the action of his own will to the action of other wills — of spirits like his own resident in all things, though at first not necessarily supernatural. If he has no clear idea yet of the difference in kind between things and himself, or even between live and dead things, so much

the more is he compelled to figure himself in their likeness, and them in his own.

The mere persistence of things he might at first regard as placidly as the beasts: but he is too dependent on them not to watch their changes with keen interest. If he scarcely notices the quiet stream, he cannot overlook the swollen torrent; and the storm and the earthquake dismay him as they dismay the beasts. Here at all events he sees the supernatural, for he can hardly compare himself on equal terms with the strong (not necessarily *hostile*[1]) spirits at work in these. However inscrutable their action might be, it was too fascinating to be looked on with unmixed fear, though the mystery deepened as he gradually learned by trial the limits of his power, and found that many things which had seemed matters of course must be put down to some sort of supernatural agency.

But it is not good for man to be alone in a world which he has peopled with spirits natural and supernatural. His craving for security and rest under the protection of some higher power is as natural as his craving for food, and must have shown itself at once

[1] As Mr. J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, 9, takes for granted. It is a strange book. Its first line complains of "theological cavils," its first argument forces on Mr. Jevons an idiotic inconsistency which is made to run through his work—and is quite imaginary; and so it goes on, forcing absurdities at every turn. For instance, Mr. Jevons draws a broad distinction between "art-magic" and "sympathetic magic." Mr. Robertson has a right to dispute it if he thinks it unsound; but he makes gratuitous confusion (p. 23, notes [4] and [5]) by quoting Mr. Jevons' words about "magic"—by which he always means art-magic, as if they referred to sympathetic magic. Habitual mistakes of this kind used to be called special pleading; but I do not know what is now their proper description.

Even the superior persons who have risen above it will tell us that the weakness is almost universal, and in most cases very hard to overcome. So deeply is it rooted in human nature that few even of the enlightened can escape occasional falls into religion. There is no reason to suppose that primitive man had less than we have of that craving; and if so, it seems a more natural and a more likely basis for religion than pure and simple fear.

Of the earliest stage of religion we have no direct knowledge; but it cannot have been one of continual terror. Even the beasts are above this; and primitive man must have been as good as they. Moreover, there is an impassable gulf between such terror and religion. There is no more religion in mere fear of spirits than in mere fear of a tyrant; and out of mere fear no religion can be developed. The vital element of religion is not fear but trust, so that it cannot ever have been mere fear without trust. Let us put this again, that there may be no mistake. Fear as an animal passion has nothing to do with religion; and the fear of punishment suggested by a bad conscience is not a necessary part of religion. There was not much of it in such early times as had no great sense of sin; and there is not much left of it in such choice products of the highest religions as can say, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. We should no more fear the gods than we fear our nearest friend, if only we were as sure of our relation to them. Thus there is a stage below the bad conscience as well as one above it; and the theory that fear developed into religion would not be even plaus-

ible if the intermediate stages did not almost cover history.

If religion is a subject of evolution, its earliest form is likely to have been rather childlike than either savage or idyllic. The theory that "an Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam" is no better and no worse than the other extreme, that the most degraded savages are the most faithful portraits of primitive man. The child begins with instinctive trust—neither as an angel nor as a monster, but with a chaos of unreflecting impulses waiting to be shaped into a definitely good or bad character. Even if there ever was a primitive stage of continual terror, it cannot have lasted. Animal fear has nothing to do with the matter: and as soon as man had mind enough to reflect on his fear he must also have had mind enough to see the obvious escape, by finding friends among the spirits around him.

LECTURE XI.

PRIMITIVE RELIGION.

II.

Accordingly, one of the earliest forms of religion we can trace is totemism. It is widespread even now in America and Australia, lasted till Christian times in Egypt, is recorded by Herodotus for sundry parts of the world, and has left so many traces elsewhere, that we can hardly avoid the conclusion that the ancestors even of the most civilized peoples were largely totemists: and at the other end of the scale the offerings of savages and others to confessedly evil spirits would seem partly debasements of totemism and partly returns to the magic and animism from which totemism was perhaps never free. For we should be going much beyond the evidence if we supposed that every nation, or indeed any nation, has gone through a period in which its religious ideas were purely totemistic. We should rather expect to find much confusion. Totemism may have held on a lower plane something like the position of monotheism in northern Israel or Christianity in southern Europe. Even if it was a dominant religion which nobody wished to renounce, there may have been any amount of baser

worships and downright magic practised alongside of it. Only, totemism had a development before it; the others had none. To take a geological illustration: the dominance of reptiles in the Trias does not mean that there were not plenty of lower forms living along with them; only from the reptiles came the mammalia, while the lower forms which survived have always remained lower forms. So we shall find that from totemism sprang monotheism, while so far as other forms of thought survive at all they are still very little changed. Even polytheism was no more than a marsupial side-branch which led to nothing higher. If then we concentrate our attention for awhile on totemism, we shall not do so under any illusion that it was the only form even of animal-worship, or always the most prominent religion in early times, but simply because it lies on the direct line of evolution—the rest are side-branches.

The meaning of totemism is that the clan, itself held together by blood-relation, forms an alliance, and therefore a blood-relation with the spirit resident, not in an individual animal, but in all the animals of a certain species. These animals were kindly treated, so that some of them became tame, for no individual was allowed to kill them. But on certain occasions one of them was killed and eaten by the whole clan, that the life of the spirit (now become the god) might pass into them and renew the blood-covenant. It had to be wholly consumed, and every member of the clan was required to partake of it.

There could not be much idea of revelation yet, though there was already a clear sense of dependence

on the god and duty to the clan, including the god. Such loyalty no doubt was pleasing to him; and he further signified his good will by sending prosperity and his displeasure by calamities, but there was not much room for any special communications from him, except such as might be found in the appearances and actions of the totem animal.

Totemism was the worship of a clan, and could not be adapted to a larger circle without essential changes, so that it decayed and passed away as the clan decayed and passed away. Even in its best days the totem god was but the one friendly spirit out of many, so that evil-disposed persons could always form relations of their own for selfish purposes with other spirits, which, being other, were not friendly to the clan. Such relations would ape the regular relations of the clan; but their spirit would be base—magic, not religion,—and a clear step down towards the savage worship of evil spirits. Then came changes when flocks and herds increased, when separate families were formed, when manners grew less barbarous. The heap of stones on which the blood was poured became an altar, and the post or single stone on which the blood was dashed grew into an idol, which might afterwards require a temple and a priest. But long before this the revolting scramble for the divine flesh was turned into a sacrificial feast of communion with the god and rejoicing before him; and the parts that could no longer be eaten were decently disposed of by burning. So also the drinking of blood was replaced by pouring it out, and this again on minor occasions might come to be

replaced by symbols like red paint or the pouring out of wine. Things like these might be fair developments: but others were destructive of the system. When families began to settle down by themselves, the totems they or their members chose became family or private gods, and the old clan totem was forgotten. And as they had looked up of old to the clan-god as their animal ancestor, now they turned it round, and began to make gods of human ancestors. Meanwhile the god's connection with the animal species was loosened in every direction. The symbolism was obscured by tree totems and plant totems, and the trust which was placed in a protector threw the emphasis on his divine side and developed more human or at any rate less bestial conceptions of him. He might be incarnate like the Apis bull in an individual animal, he might be figured as a man with the animal's head, or he might stand out in clear divinity with the animal no more than sacred to him, or in course of time his connection with it might be entirely forgotten. So too the old idea of communion through the blood of the totem animal gave place to a sacrifice to the god; and this again opened out whole theories of gifts to the god to win his favour.

Again, a clan might flourish in the world. It might form a permanent union with other clans: and then the single god of one clan might become one of the gods of all the clans. Polytheism seems to have arisen largely in this way, though there were doubtless other ways too. Family gods and ancestors not uncommonly became gods of a larger circle without displacing other gods. The powers of nature are sundry; and any number of

them might be worshipped together. Superstitions also are sundry; and in later times, though only in later times, a superstition might be developed into religion by a change of attitude to the spirit concerned, as when the Raging Spirit which was an evil to be averted on the *do ut abeas* principle was turned into Zeus the Gracious, the averter of evil.[1] There must already have been gracious gods before such an evil was changed into their likeness.

Polytheism might form a hierarchy of gods from the first without any real approach to monotheism, for the logic of conquest would often make the god of the dominant clan or family the dominant god of all the clans. Then in some cases an approach might be made to pantheism (not to monotheism) by viewing the rest of the gods as aspects of the One. But more commonly, at first perhaps always, they were gradually and in an irregular way limited to particular functions; and presently mythology would come in to explain and smooth away some of the resulting incongruities and confusions. But when once this stage of almost conscious invention was reached, there was nothing to hinder the indefinite multiplication of inferior or functional gods. The Romans, for instance, have been δεισιδαιμονέστεροι in all ages, endeavouring to make life safe and pleasant as well as holy by the wholesale manufacture of gods (they called them saints in later times) to preside over every aspect of Nature and every imaginable occupation of men. However, we need not trace down the history of ancient and modern *indigitamenta*.

[1] Miss Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 28.

Or again, a clan might come down in the world, or even be wiped out in war. Then the survivors might seek refuge with some other tribe, and even bring their gods with them; but they were very commonly driven out into the mountain, the desert or the swamp, a remnant of broken men with faith confounded. It may be that the archæologists have allowed for these terrible uprootings as a source of savagery: the student of history is never allowed to forget them. We see a little of them in the anarchy of Germany in Roman times; but for their full significance we must look elsewhere. Take some of the worst parts of the world. The Bushmen have been driven southward into the Kalahari desert; and the worst of the negroes are those crowded to the West Coast by successive waves of invasion. From their affinity to the Bororos of Brazil we gather that the Tehuelches of Patagonia are exiles from the sunnier north, perhaps in their turn driving before them the Yahgans of Fuegia; and the astounding multiplicity of Columbian and Alaskan languages would seem to shew that here again we have no more than wrecks and remnants of tribes which have seen better days. So elsewhere: the wonder is not that the corners of the earth are held by savages, but that any civilization has managed to survive.

For it is hardly possible to exaggerate the mischief done by these violent breakings-up of clans. A change of religion is at best the most unsettling of all changes for serious persons, and nothing but absolute purity of motive can prevent it from being utterly demoralizing. There is no more pathetic sight in our time than the

man who feels the glamour of the Gospel, and would gladly embrace its glorious promises for this life and for life eternal, if only Truth would let him listen to the siren song. But when he renounces the light of past ages and goes out into the cold grey shadows of scepticism, he is supported more than he knows by the civilization of the Christian state around him, and comforts himself that he still worships Truth, and if Christ has failed him, Truth has not deceived him. This is no such bankruptcy of faith as the broken clansman's who has lost his all. The god in whom he trusted has confounded him; his state is no more; he has no science for a refuge—only magic. What wonder if he turns away, hopeless, listless, and confounded, to animalism and savagery?

We might picture totemism as a high religion if we dwelt on the absence of priest and temple, sacrifice and image, and on its central idea of communion. In these respects it is like the very highest. "And I saw no temple therein." But such a picture would be onesided and misleading. In fact, it was a low religion, which left some of the most elementary ideas undeveloped. It was not even a definite monotheism or a definite polytheism, but held both systems in solution. It was in so far monotheistic that the clan had but one god, and looked up to him as the highest being they could imagine. Indeed, they could not credit him with less than power to help them and willingness to use it. But the highest they could imagine was sensuous in form and low in kind. They had small thought of

> A God of truth and without iniquity,
> Just and right is he.

Nor was he a whit more real than the gods of hostile clans, or the spirits whom no clan worshipped: only they trusted he was stronger. Thus, if they remained faithful to him, as they might if they came to base their trust on moral attributes, they might advance to monotheism; but if for any reason they called in other gods, as every people did but Israel,[1] then the broad road of polytheism lay straight before them.

Another fundamental idea was beyond the reach of totemism, for it took no direct note of personal sin. Nor could it: for the god's relation was with the clan, not with the individual. Yet it implied a good deal that might develop the sense of guilt. As no loyal clansman would doubt the god's power as long as the clan remained in being, misfortune could only be his message that somebody had offended against him. Who was that? Let him be stoned like Achan for bringing such danger on the clan; and further, let the god be appeased by a solemn renewal of the broken covenant. But when the parts which were not eaten were burned as well as the parts which could not be eaten, and when this burning was further regarded as a way of giving them to the god, the renewing rite became a feast on a sacrifice offered to the god: and as feasting was in this case unseemly, the sacrifice which remained became a sacrifice of expiation.

[1] The question of an early monotheism in Babylonia is hardly ripe for the general student. If a real monotheism was reached—one personal God and no more—it would have a high significance in some directions; but the fact would remain that it did not last in Babylonia as it did in Israel. It would be at most a passing phase of thought. So far, however, as I can learn, it was rather a pantheistic confusion of the Indian sort than a genuine monotheism.

It was much the same in Egypt—monism, but not monotheism.

One step further, though it may not have been taken for some time. If the god's displeasure is shewn by misfortune to the clan, is it not equally shewn by sickness and misfortune to families and individuals? These would be due to much the same causes, and have to be expiated in much the same way. But if conscience is invited to find out what is wrong, where will it stop? In the totemistic stage a man might feel pretty clear if he was true to the clan, and had no dealings with strange gods; but there was plenty of room for sin when polytheism came in, with its perpetual suggestion that even an unknown god ought not to be left without his offering. The fear of offending only increased in the course of time, when antiquated observances and elaborated ceremonials multiplied occasions of transgression. But the greater the number of things commanded, the greater the merit that might be laid up by doing them. So the Pharisee of heathenism never doubted of being able to give the gods their due till conscience began to whisper that pure hands are nothing without a pure heart. This made a new difficulty. Observances can be brought within compass by proper diligence; but there is no limit to the sin that may lurk in thoughts and intents of the heart. But if moral sin was graver than ceremonial, the usual expiations might not suffice. Yet expiation must be had at any cost. Unless the gods were quite implacable, there must be sacrifices of greater power, if only they could be discovered. So some restored old and barbarous rites, while others devised new and horrible expiations. If a burnt offering was not enough, they could give a

hecatomb; if beasts were of no avail, they could offer men; if the gods gave no answer, they could stir infernal powers to their help. "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This is the culminating stage of terror in religion, for it is not vague as with savages, but sharply pointed by the horrors of remorse. The worst abominations of the old religions arose in this way, from the strainings of a guilty conscience after some such full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction as might for ever silence the accusing memory of past misdoings. The darkest rites of the ancient worships, both Semitic and European, may all be understood as the search for a true atoning sacrifice.

In some ways polytheism marks a decline from totemism. It forsook once for all the road which might have led to monotheism, and never regained it. The idea of deity was now confused by a discordant crowd of gods which could only be given a semblance of order by letting them melt into one another, or by putting a Zeus or an Odin at the head of them. But this, like the Golden Bull, was organizing anarchy and calling it a constitution. Further, the practice of communion with the god was higher than that of sacrifice to the gods which partly replaced it; and sacrifice itself was deformed with fantastic and immoral rites. On the other hand, the idea of deity was raised by separation from the animal, especially in the higher or anthropomorphic forms of polytheism; and the tribes and nations which now became possible gave a wider experience of things divine and human. It was narrow

still, but sometimes vivid. Religion was firmly linked to public duty: and it was well that human restlessness and greed should have to bear the heavy yoke of custom till conscience was awake enough to fret against it. Greece and Rome could value a man for courage or beauty, wealth or family, intellect or skill; but in the days of liberty they had no respect for man as man. Class feeling made it hard, and slavery made it impossible. So they clung for very life to the custom which settled the order of society. If that was changed, they had no protection. So custom, and even the codes of law from Hammurabi downward, claimed a divine sanction, which vanished but slowly in the course of ages. Even Greece hardly reached the idea that if law is divine, particular laws are human, and may be freely changed by men as need arises. Only Rome fully grasped it. But religion is the most persistent of all custom; and Rome herself only ventured on genuine toleration under Constantine, and then only till the time of Theodosius.

Meanwhile there was a real gain in having the world "filled with gods," though filled in a mechanical way with gods of a low sort. Even the abominations devised in the search for atonement marked a real advance, in so far as they were prompted by a deeper sense of sin, and therefore by a fuller knowledge of human nature. Nor can we doubt that the moral power of religion showed itself in polytheism wherever it was a real belief. It was at best low, debased with irrational observances and confused with what Origen calls its godless multitude of gods. Such however as it was, it thoroughly pervaded

the outward life; and if scoffers were never wanting, neither was genuine devotion. It worked in the main like monotheism, though on a lower plane. Indeed, it is not always easy to draw a clear line of distinction between monotheism and polytheism. A believer in many gods may attach himself to one of them, and almost forget the rest; while a believer in one god may have no doubt that there are many more, though perhaps he calls them saints or devils. These men are both practically polytheists, for they both conceive of one god as limited by others in the polytheistic way, and are both likely to worship him in the polytheistic way. So nearly, indeed, does polytheism approach these lowest forms of monotheism that in practice there may be little difference between them.

The noblest part of polytheism is its protest, as given by the writer *de mysteriis Ægyptiorum*, that "the gods have not forsaken the earth, but pervade it like the sunshine"; and its teaching that the gods are a very present refuge in time of trouble has made it an enduring force in history. It stood so far for truth; and therefore criticism and philosophy exposed its errors in vain, and even those lower forms of monotheism which have no God immanent in the world were often defeated. Faith in immortal finite gods outlived sophists and philosophers, and was not very generally shaken even by the deep unrest of the Augustan age. Christianity was a more formidable enemy, and seemed for a while to carry all before it; but polytheism returned as soon as Christ's true manhood was forgotten. The theological abstraction which remained was forgotten too in East and West. Men

turned away (and small blame to them so far) in quest of more human and more kindly deities than the Ruler of the *Dies iræ*; and to this day we see the living image of ancient heathenism in every country where they worship saints. Polytheism has done a work in history, like the Jewish law; yet, as with the Jewish law, that work was not to make the decisive advance, but to shew that it would have to be made from some other side—to shew that there is no firm foothold between one personal all-sovereign God and the gulf of pantheism.

It must be allowed that polytheism supplied the most ample means of revelation. A true believer in the gods had much to say on that head; and we can see pretty well what it was from the rebuke that was afterwards given to the Christians. The gods, he would say—the gods are living gods and not a fable. They conversed with men, and sometimes lived among them in a better age than ours. They guided in their labours, and delivered from their perils, the heroes and benefactors of men. They revealed the rites of worship handed down to us, and ordained the good old laws and customs of our city. Nor have they now forsaken us. They give us the fruits of the earth, our harvest and our vintage, and all the rest of the good things of life. They signify their will to holy men in visions and ecstatic inspiration, to the pious inquirer by oracles and dreams and omens, to an offending city by pestilence and famine and defeat in battle, to wicked and ungrateful men by sickness and misfortune. Their favour has built up the city's greatness, and their wrath will overthrow it if we

change their laws, neglect their worship, or despise the warnings they send us.

Something of this kind might be the answer which a heathen of the better sort would give to them that questioned him. It is not wanting in earnestness and dignity, or in a genuinely religious faith in higher powers who care for us and hear our prayer. Nevertheless this is neither a rational nor a moral conception of things divine. In the first place, it has no basis of historic truth. The facts alleged from the past are either myths or legends of the flimsiest sort, and would often be unedifying if they could be supposed true. The tales that were told of the gods were a scandal from the time of Xenophanes onward; and the customs of worship founded on them needed a good deal of allegory to get them into some sort of agreement with decency and common sense. Even so, they gave abundance of occasion for Cynics and Christians to blaspheme. Meanwhile the man in the street got his excuse for "thinking that lust is godliness,"[1] and Clement of Alexandria had something to say for his position that the beasts of Egypt were better than the gods of Greece.[2]

It is easy to ridicule messages conveyed in oracles and omens; but we shall need some care if we are to see clearly why they were so unsatisfactory to reason and conscience. Given that there are gods, it was not unreasonable to expect signs of their will; and to look for them in the whole range of phenomena, for experience only could point out the particular phenomena

[1] Clem. Al., *Protr.* 60, p. 53: *τὴν ἀκολασίαν εὐσέβειαν νομίζοντες.*
[2] *Ibid.* 39, p. 33: *εἰ καὶ θηρία, ἀλλ' οὐ μοιχικὰ, κ.τ.λ.*

in which they might be expected. So far the polytheists reasoned well; nor does the system seem to have been a systematic imposture. An element of imposture there must have been, for prophets were of all sorts, like the people; but for the same reason it cannot have been wholly or even chiefly an imposture. The mistake was in the utter crudeness of the appeal to experience. No principle of revelation was looked for, no serious reason was given why one thing rather than another should be a sign. If tradition said that a clap of thunder, a weasel across the road, the rustling of the oaks at Dodona, the flight of a bird, or the state of a victim's entrails, portended this or that, there was an end of the matter. Yet tradition was at best a vague report from the past, which present experience was piously believed to confirm. We have precisely similar notions current in our own time, like the bad luck of thirteen at dinner, or of marriage on a Friday; and these are similarly unrelated to experience. The difference is that the ancient superstitions gained a semblance of rationality at the cost of a scandal to religion.

Again, given that this or that is a sign, how is its meaning to be ascertained? Not surely by the feeling of the moment, but by reference to character and life as a whole. A dream or an omen comes to me; and we will assume that it is a message from the gods. But if even a lawyer or a doctor sees that our question generally involves many things we never thought of, I cannot safely take for granted that the divine message refers solely to the scheme I have in hand just now. However, let it pass: we will assume this too. There

is still the question what the sign means. It may be clear; but such signs are most commonly ambiguous, unless their meaning is fixed by reports of good or bad luck following similar signs in past time: and if such reports are not to be trusted, I am thrown back on general considerations of justice and expediency, and am none the wiser for my special signs. The polytheists could not help seeing that such signs need interpreters, and interpreters were not wanting; but they never were able to find reasonable and moral principles of interpretation. It was not reasonable to rest everything on unverified tradition; and it was neither moral nor reasonable to make the interpretation depend on such technical skill as the most immoral of men might have in the fullest measure. Sooner or later the thought was sure to come, that messages of this kind were no credit to the gods, if they really sent them.

But there was a more general weakness in these polytheistic ways of thinking. There can be no idea of revelation without some idea of a divine person to give it, and of a human person to receive it. A thing cannot give one, and an automaton cannot receive one. Nor can the idea be clear without the clear conception of personality divine and human which was wanting in the earlier religions, and is wanting even now in the backward religions. There could be no clearness in those early forms of thought which represented the divine by spirits of more or less indefinite personality, the human by clans from which the family, and even the individual, was not sharply distinguished: and in the most modern the confusion returns whenever the

divine is obscured by pantheistic vagueness, or the human is merged in some great machine of church or state which undertakes for him the part of Providence and conscience.

The conception of divine personality made some progress under the influences of polytheism. In its lower forms, like the Semitic or the Latin, the gods are still in the main personifications and abstractions; but they become very human in such higher developments as the Greek or the Scandinavian. Here was an advance: it may be[1] that men need to see first the weakness of man in gods before they can see the power of God in man. Human gods may form a passage from bestial spirits to a divine God. But if they mark an advance, they mark also a limitation, for they are human in too gross a way. In the main they are matter of fact copies of men just as they were, or very little idealized. Thus good and bad were reflected on the gods without distinction, so that everything which narrows and debases human personality similarly narrowed and debased the divine ideal. Of course, gods varied in character like men, and some of them are fine creations. Zeus and Athena are vastly nobler figures than a stupid Ares or a malicious Hera. But vices are more easily copied than virtue; and every crime could be abundantly justified by the example of gods—not uncommonly by that of Zeus himself. If gods like these could lift the conception of revelation a little higher than the totemistic beasts had left it, this was as much as they could do.

[1] Julia Wedgwood, *Message of Israel*, 82.

Had the polytheists been on the right road the teaching of history would have helped them forward: instead of this, it brought confusion on these crude conceptions, and shewed the urgent need of reforming them. Yet reform proved impossible. There might have been a real advance if the gods could have been cleansed and put in true subordination to some better Father of gods and men than the Zeus of the legends: and something of this kind seems to be what the best and purest minds of Greece were feeling after, from Xenophanes to Porphyry. Nor is it unworthily expressed in the highest flights of Æschylus and Plato. But they never fully reached it. Æschylus could not shake off his belief in the envy of the gods: and though Plato rose above this, he made matter a real limitation of the divine. In fact, the legends prevented any general advance. Nothing was gained by shewing the absurdity of some of the more scandalous tales; and by the time they were all discredited they had made it for ever impossible to bring together the ideas of gods and virtue. Plato was for vigorous measures, forgetting that myths which have grown up of themselves cannot be reshaped by deliberate reforms. Others put pious meanings on them; but there was no persuading common men to lift up their hearts to something better than the gods. The greatness of the difficulty may be seen from the desperate efforts to escape it. The Epicureans could find no better plan than that of respectfully moving the gods upstairs out of the way. They were too blessed forsooth to concern themselves with the affairs of men. Euhemerists and others tried every device of allegory,

and the Eclectics of the third century after Christ made all the gods of all the nations broken lights of one far-off impersonal Supreme. This was no true monotheism even for the philosophers; and the world in general remained as polytheistic—and as immoral—as ever. The mixture of passionate devotion and gross licentiousness in Apuleius is characteristic; and the austere figure of Julian in the ribald processions at Antioch bears witness that heathenism died unreformed, and shameless to the last. The worst of the matter was that polytheism misled not only its devotees, but the reformers themselves. In their undiscriminating zeal to root out the undiscriminating anthropomorphism which had done the mischief, they denied the Supreme both good and evil indiscriminately, till they had refined away personality itself as too anthropomorphic. They saw no escape from the devil of polytheism but by rushing headlong into the deep sea of pantheism.

Nor was the conception of human personality much more advanced. In patriarchal times the family was the unit, the individual an item of it which in many ways did not concern outsiders at all. On that footing the earliest states commonly dealt with him. The family was responsible for its members, and shared the guilt of its head. Achan's children are stoned with him, and Abraham offers Isaac without a thought that his son's life is not absolutely his to give. Even when this stage was outgrown, small account was taken of the individual. In Asia he was "the king's animal," as he still is in Siam—food for powder, or its equivalent in the language of Nebuchadnezzar or Xerxes. The

excellent majesty of an Eastern king is summed up in "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive." In Europe things were often different. The Greek was a free citizen, and the Roman did not cease to boast under the Empire that he was subject to law, not to the caprice of one man like the Persians. Nevertheless, the individual was wholly subordinated to the state in the good old times of Greece and Rome; and the personal freedom he gained later was due rather to the decay of ancient custom than to any generally higher estimate of his personal value. It was something to have the rearing of children made a trust rather than the property it had been in patriarchal times; but the trust was rather for the state than for the child. Sparta may have avowed it more openly than Athens; but the purpose of education in early times, both in Greece and Rome, was in the first place rather to turn out useful citizens than to make the best of the individual. The Greeks were always too refined to care much for the Roman beast-fights; but even they did not respect human life for its own sake. Within the state they began with exposure of infants, and finished with proscriptions of men; and outside it the foreigner had no rights, though treaties must be kept for the sake of our own gods. Polytheism exasperated war, not indeed with religious fanaticism—only Persians destroyed temples for that reason—but with the feeling that we have nothing in common with an enemy who worships other gods. And war was the chief source of slavery; and slavery was the chief bar to a full recognition of human personality. In citizens, well;

but slaves are things, not persons, and freedmen and workmen were not much better than slaves. Plato himself could not get beyond this. Polytheism stopped all advance in this direction till first the mysteries and Stoicism, and then Christianity with more success, brought out the idea that men are persons as men, and not in virtue of some more limited conditions.

LECTURE XII.

GREECE.

We need not stop to consider whether the Aryans or Indo-Europeans had a single clear-cut primitive religion, or whether they are not as a single race more or less a figment of the philologists. Certainly it is hard to believe that peoples physically and morally so different as Celts and Teutons are as near akin as their languages would indicate. However that may be, the earliest Aryan religions in western Asia and the Mediterranean region seem to have gathered round the powers of Nature —the sky and the cloud, the sun and the moon, the night and the dawn, the fire and the wind.[1] This is the surface; but in Greece there was a dark background of magic superstitions and "aversions" of evil beings; and there must have been the same sort of thing elsewhere. So far as we find ancestor-worship, it is at any rate subordinate; though the traces of totemism are enough to indicate that it had been a factor of religion in prehistoric times.

These early religions have a general likeness all the way from Italy to India, though there must have been

[1] Schräder, *Prehistoric Antiquities*, 414 (trans. Jevons), counts these "phonetically safe."

specific differences everywhere. In Greece, for example, the gods of the sea are more prominent, in Italy those of agriculture; and the poetic element, so conspicuous in Greece and India, is almost wanting with the Latins and the Slavs. But this earlier type of religion broke down in divers ways. In Persia it became an austere dualism, in India a polytheistic pantheism, in Greece a frankly anthropomorphic polytheism, while in Rome the gods were little more than abstractions till Greek influence was felt, and religion remained to the end a part of the discipline of the State. The toleration of the earlier Empire was more laxity than principle, and the real toleration of the Edict of Milan was not lasting. Aryan religion might be debased into magic, it might turn to a dualism of good and evil, it might lose itself in pantheism, it might be replaced by philosophy; but from first to last it never developed into the genuine monotheism whose first word is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. If individuals reached anything above a pantheistic monism, they always had to begin by giving up the first principles of polytheism.

In the whole range of this great development there is no more instructive contrast than that of Greece with India in one direction, with Rome in the other. Leaving Rome till we come to her influence on Christianity, let us look at India. The old pantheon of the Vedas must have grown up in lands of a generally European and Mediterranean character, for in fauna and flora even Afghanistan is much more akin to Greece and Italy than to the basin of the Ganges. So at first sight it does not differ very greatly from what the Greek would

seem to have been at a somewhat later date. Its general structure is much the same, though the individual gods correspond imperfectly to each other. But we notice already a significant difference in the way the gods are spoken of. If the Greek was often in doubt what god to address, or by what name to address him, he was clear upon the whole (I mean in early times) that gods have individual differences. There were plenty of confusions; but still distinction is the rule, confusion the exception. Even conflations like Apollo and Dionysus are individual enough. In India confusion is the rule, for if the gods have names they have not much individual character. In a different way, they are almost as abstract as those of Rome; and there was no strong State to keep them apart with fixed and settled rites of worship for each. So there was already a tendency to merge them into one another and look on them as aspects of One. But if the gods represented powers of Nature, and the thought which reached the One was only a process of unification, there was nothing to carry it outside the order of Nature. The forces which had been distributed through the parts of the world were now gathered into a single Force; and that was all. Hence the result was pantheism.

But the Greeks on their rocky coasts were as much impressed by the changes and variety of Nature as the Indians had been by its exuberance and mystery. The language of the rolling sea is not the language of the flowing Ganges. The landsmen of India feared the "black water," the mountaineers of Israel beheld from afar their symbol of the barren struggles of restless

wickedness; but to the Ionians of Europe and Asia its bright blue waters were an inspiration. Nor is the difference less between the clear hills of Greece and the dank forests of the Indian plains. The Greeks might imagine sirens and centaurs, but they never rioted in monsters as they might have done if they had lived in villages by the side of the mysterious jungle and seen its abounding wealth of life, from the royal tigers downward. Their own bright world was a charm and a fascination: its mystery they felt, but they never let it crush them.

Now, while uniformity can be represented by abstractions, and mystery must be hinted by symbols, variety can only be expressed in the likeness of men. All ages have instinctively personified the changing face of Nature. Thus, while the spirits of the nether world are often grotesque like Indian gods, the Olympians of Homer are men, whatever else they are. Zeus and the gods are made in the image and after the likeness of Agamemnon and the men. They are born in time, and have their favoured homes. They feast and quarrel and fight, and burst with laughter like their worshippers. Their one substantial difference from men is immortality: and this is the distinctive mark of a god from Homer's time to the "last of the heroes," as the oracle calls Cleomedes of Astypalæa. So in Christian times, while the Latins imaged eternal life in a *civitas Dei*, the Greeks explained it as immortality. Ignatius[1] already speaks of the Lord's Supper as *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας*, and most of his successors find the "deification" of the Christian in the gift

[1] Ign. *Eph.* 20.

of immortality. It is not without need that St. Paul[1] so sharply marks off in advance the Christian conception of eternal life as something more than honour and glory and incorruption.

However, there was upon the whole a great advance in this view of the gods. Human feeling is higher than the uniformity of nature, and the nature-gods became friends of men as soon as they were viewed as men. Hence we find in Greece a primitive familiarity of gods and men which may remind us of Genesis, but is foreign to the genius of Italy. It seemed natural for Zeus to share the feasts of the blameless Ethiopians, or for Poseidon to labour at the walls of Troy, whereas the relations of Numa with Egeria are exceptional at Rome. This intimacy of gods and men is (among the Aryans) peculiarly Greek. There is not much of it among the Teutons, though their gods are as human as those of Homer, differing from men chiefly in their powers of magic.[2] If Odin is called All-father, the thought is left vague; and in any case he is no Father of the Vanir. He was not originally the greatest of the gods; and his name at the head of every royal pedigree seems a late insertion. There are no stories like those of Io and Europa, no demigods like Perseus and Hercules. The adventures of the gods are rather with the giantesses

[1] Rom. ii 7.

[2] Tegner's *Frithiof Saga* is essentially a Christian poem, notwithstanding its heathen dress. Nothing can be more unlike the general spirit of the North than its attitude towards magic. Frithiof cuts up his magic ring in the storm at sea, runs his magic ship ashore when he comes to King Ring, and in the hour of sore temptation flings away his magic sword. When all this is done he stands out in his true greatness, simply as a man. Such, I take it, is meant to be the moral of the poem.

—Rindr and Gerdhr and Skadhi—than with women of mortal birth, and the heroes of the North are men and nothing more.

So the Greeks never found an answer to Homer's old problem of the difference between a god and a man. The excellence of gods was human, and the excellence of men was divine. Unlike the clear-cut Latin *deus*, their θεὸς was so fluid, so vague, so human, that when once Lysander had been deified as a living man, the custom spread rapidly. Barbarians made gods of their kings from the Pharaohs of Egypt to the Jubas of Mauritania; but the Greeks, to do them justice, worshipped rather beneficence than mere power. Deification was no doubt a fulsome compliment and a very cheap one, sometimes meaning exactly what we mean by a vote of thanks; yet there was often real gratitude behind it. If some deifications represent but passing enthusiasms and flatteries, others were more permanent. The great Roman benefactor Flamininus was not forgotten. It was less the servility of the Senate than the gratitude of the provinces which pressed on Augustus the honours of a god: and foremost in the provinces were Greek cities like Pergamus—"where Satan dwelleth," grimly adds St. John.[1]

We shall see presently the bearing of this anthropomorphic thought on Christian and modern times; but for the present we must return to the decay of the Olympian theology.

Though a perfect philosophy must be a true religion so far as it goes, and a perfect religion must rest on a true philosophy, there was a broad difference of aim and

[1] Apoc. ii 13

character between Greek philosophy and Greek polytheism. As soon as truth and virtue were set up as aims, it was clear that seekers after truth might set aside a religion which only spoke for custom, and that the quest of virtue would not be helped by ceremonials for which no moral reason could be given. Not that the philosophers ever expressly renounced the Olympian gods. Even the Epicureans treated them with formal respect, and others with something more, for an atheist or two like Diagoras is not worth counting. At the same time they never admitted them as working parts of their systems. The Zeus of Plato or of the Stoics has very little in common with the Zeus of Homer; and the rest of the gods are purely ornamental. In scientific language, they are epiphenomena, for they make no difference in the results.

The earlier Ionian philosophers represent science rather than metaphysics or religion, and therefore have little to do with the conception of the knowledge of God. Thales and his successors are agreed in looking to one form of matter or another as the first principle of all things—the ἀρχή, as Anaximander first called it. The Eleatics also stood for unity, though Xenophanes is undecided between an ideal and a material unity, and both views are represented among his successors. The pluralists of the fifth century, who assumed many original substances instead of one, advanced to the distinction of moving cause from matter; but upon the whole they too keep inside the region of cosmology. Yet the ethical and religious elements in philosophy are steadily gaining on the scientific. Thus Pythagoras mixed up with it

an Egyptian doctrine of transmigration, Xenophanes a denunciation of anthropomorphic gods, and Heraclitus a protest against sacrifice, while Empedocles enunciated the principle that like is known by like. But a still more important step was taken when Anaxagoras threw down the hint (for he did not work it out) that "all things lay in confusion together: then came mind and ordered them." So complete an abandonment of the purely scientific ground could not remain unchallenged. Democritus replied with a system of mechanical naturalism, accounting for the order of the world by he blind movement of atoms, as the Epicureans did later. But Democritus never thought out thought itself, so that he saw no difficulty in joining ethics of freedom to his necessarian physics.

Halting for a moment about the middle of the fifth century B.C., we see that some of the characteristic lines of Greek philosophy had been already laid down. Thus the Eleatics had raised the question of Being, and Anaxagoras and Democritus were agreed in stating the problem as a passage from appearance to reality. Anaxagoras had thrown out the hint that order was the work of mind; while Democritus appears to make knowledge the highest good, and claims the whole world for the wise man's country. But there is no trace yet of any new idea of revelation.

Meanwhile Democritus on one side and the Sophists on the other stand for the scepticism of an age of transition. Change was rapid in the generation after Marathon, when Athens was founding not only a new Empire, but a new kind of empire on the face of the

earth. There is no such unsettler of old religion as commerce, whether in the fifth century or the first, or again in the nineteenth. It crumbled first Greek polytheism, then Roman; and now it is crumbling — some say Christianity, but the weakness it has found out belongs rather to those Latin conceptions of Christianity which the Reformation by no means rooted out from northern Europe. However, we can understand the appearance in an age so like our own of Democritus with a mechanical system of physics, and of the Sophists with their disbelief of absolute truth as an attainable thing. In doubting the certainty of knowledge they were thoroughly modern; but their shameless readiness to argue on either side (as if they were advocates) on any thesis whatever was rather a Greek than a modern piece of rhetorical bravado.

Times of doubt are also times of renewed belief. Doubt has always dashed in vain upon the solid rock of human faith in truth. It can but scour the sand away, and show it more deeply rooted than we knew. The great work of Socrates, and of Plato after him, was partly to maintain against the Sophists that truth and right are not conventions, but things of which we can have true knowledge; partly to shift the stress of philosophy to man instead of nature. On one side it was a protest against the *πάντων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος* of Protagoras; on the other it looked to human nature as the clue to its problems. Again, it worked not like the Sophists by accepting the objections of each school to the doctrines of the next, and concluding that truth is beyond us, but by careful definitions and siftings of

arguments—a process carried further and systematized by Aristotle.

Perhaps Plato himself did not exactly know how much of his thought he owed to Socrates, and how much was strictly his own; but however that may be, the ethical advance he marks is enormous. If he uses polytheistic language, especially in his myths, he uses it only for ornament and garnish, or sometimes ironically. For all serious purposes he breaks entirely with the popular religion. He cannot endure gods with passions, gods with vices (especially envy), or gods in human form. He turns away from the revelations of polytheism as having neither serious nor likely proofs, rejecting even astrology with the rest, and sinks religion in philosophy, taking that for our one available test of truth and guide of life, "unless indeed some more sure divine word should come to us."

Pending this, he goes as nearly by the cold light of reason as a poetic nature and a spiritual instinct will allow him. Atheism is as hateful to him as superstition. There must be a personal origin for a world which is derived: and that origin must be spirit to explain its motion, reason to explain its order and beauty, goodness to explain the rule of justice in it. God is the highest idea of goodness and perfection, seeing all, guiding all, caring for all. His power is limited only by his own moral nature (for he cannot wish to change), by the permanence of evil (for there must always be evil to contrast with good), and by the intractable qualities of matter.

It is beyond my purpose, and in truth beyond my

capacity, to enter on any general discussion of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle; nor should I care in any case to stand within the danger of my distinguished colleague at Aberdeen. One question, however, cannot be passed over, for it must have occurred to you already. What has all this philosophy to do with revelation? If everything is to be worked out by man, where is the need or the room for a revelation? Well, if by revelation we mean a formal communication from heaven, the only trace (among the Greeks) of such an idea is in the appeal of the Pythagoreans in Roman times to the life and sayings of their founder. This may dimly remind us of the Christians, and indeed is not unlikely to have been more or less suggested by their example. But if a wider sense be given (as we have given it) to revelation, we shall find plenty of it in Greek philosophy. Of course it is possible enough to use the philosophical method in the interest of mechanical or agnostic theories; and some of the ancients did so use it, as some of the moderns use it now. But all the better philosophers started with two clear convictions—that there is a spark of the divine in man, and that the laws of the world which he discovers are divine thought. The one was inherited from polytheism, the other the acquisition of a science which was not irreligious; and the two together amount nearly to what we meant by saying that God's image within recognizes God's truth without. This, as we have seen, is revelation; and it is none the less revelation for coming to us in one way rather than another. So long as we recognize both its elements we may take it either from the divine side as the Jews

did, or from the human like the Greeks. Either plan has its advantages; and if the Greek method lends itself to irreligion, it is no way irreligious in itself. Greek and Jew alike broke down in the end; but if we compare the later philosophy with Pharisaism, we may fairly question whether it was the greater failure of the two.

The Greeks had their limitations like the rest of us. With all their thirst for knowledge, their splendid power of thinking, their command of language, their exquisite sense of order and beauty, their genuine religion and passion for abstract truth, they never made truth to cover the entire scope of life. For instance, though they were by far the most scientific of ancient nations, they were commonly wanting in patience for toilsome research and accurate statement of scientific facts. Thus Hipparchus and Eratosthenes are exceptions in astronomy, and Aristotle in zoology,—his work on the Cephalopods was not outgrown half a century ago. But in the main the Greek was too much of an artist to have a genuine love of truth as truth in all its forms. If his great classics are consummate works of art, he was in his best days too full of national pride to let even the idea of universal history dawn on him—that the beliefs and struggles of uncouth barbarian tribes are not without a meaning and a value for the order of history. If his feeling of order and beauty in the world has never been surpassed, so much the harder did he find it to overcome his dislike of things ungraceful or ugly, and to see that the most repulsive of them have their place and value even for the order and beauty which he loved. Again, his ad-

miration of man was rather æsthetic than moral. It was rather of outside things like mind and beauty than of man as man, and therefore as will. For this reason he never reached any true respect for his neighbour's rights; so that when once his political system was thoroughly disordered there was nothing to check the violence of faction till Rome broke in to stop the civil strife and bloodshed. In a word, he was too onesidedly artistic to see the unity of life and truth. He could follow truth (no man better) in philosophy or in geometry: but what had truth to do with religion? The æsthetic cry (never louder than in our own time) is always, If the legend, the doctrine, the ceremony, is beautiful, it is none the worse for being false or teaching falsehood. And with the divorce of truth from religion went its divorce from practical life. The "medicinal lie" in Plato is terribly significant, even if it shews rather contempt of concrete facts than real disregard of truth. At any rate it shews how little truth was understood to cover deed and word as well as thought. So, too, the Greek in his shrinking from things ugly seldom fairly faced the fact of sin. It might arise from ignorance or sense or madness; but sin as sin was a fact he did not often care to reckon with. The mysteries and the Eastern worships dealt with it in their several ways, but divine Philosophy came and looked on it and passed by on the other side. The Greek made life a Euxine Sea: if it was too rough, he called it smooth. It was for want of courage to make truth cover the whole of life that the splendour of Greek thought was dimmed by clouds of scepticism, and her glorious intellect lost itself in arid cleverness. The

Greek did all that man could do by dint of intellect; but the problem of life was not to be solved till the Jew had brought his thought of holiness, the Roman his ideal of law and order, the Teuton his belief in conscience and the individual: and all these can find no unity but in the idea developed by the Christians, of a way that expresses truth, and a truth which expresses life in all its depth and all its range.

If we have found it convenient to sum up the work of Greece at this point rather than a later one, we do not mean that it was completed by Plato and Aristotle. Greece, like Rome, did much of her best work in the times men count as her decline. Epicurean and Neoplatonic and even Stoic thought were mainly Greek, and there is no break till the closing of the schools by Justinian. But Greek thought enters on a new period after Alexander, and is more coloured by foreign influence. The conquered East reacted on Greece almost as powerfully as Greece herself on Rome two or three centuries later, bringing to the surface tendencies of Greek thought which, even if found in Plato, were not otherwise conspicuous in classical times. Few of its later leaders were pure Greeks. Zeno was half a Phœnician, Philo was a Jew, Plotinus himself was of Eastern origin. Greece was now no more than a part, and hardly a bright part, of a world of Hellenistic culture stretching far beyond Marseille and Antioch. The schools of Athens were rivalled and often more than rivalled by Alexandria, Pergamus, Tarsus, Rhodes; and the distant echoes of their teaching reached the Indus. Greece had thrown open her doors to all the nations. Romans and bar-

barians were welcome to her culture, and even to the mysteries of Eleusis. She stood forward as the teacher of the world, making disciples first of Macedonia, then of Rome, and at last shaping even Christianity into forms of her own.

But Greece herself was no longer the Greece of old time. The civic ideals which shone so brightly for Solon and Pericles had been tarnished by the demoralizing struggle of the Peloponnesian War, and no State proved able to take up the civilizing work of Athens. Sparta brutally misused her power, and Thebes lost her one great man at Mantinea. Then came the Macedonian conquest, which only the divisions of Greece made either possible or permanent. Civic life seemed to go on as before, but it ceased to be an ideal when the city had lost its freedom. Art had no decline, luxury and refinement increased, science and literary criticism flourished, as at Alexandria; but the political side of philosophy had to be dropped. The impulse given by Socrates to the ethics of the individual now carried all before it. As his predecessors had begun by leaving out the gods from their working plans, so now his successors went on to leave out the State. A few cynics and others had left it out before; but now that the old city-states were subject to great military kingdoms there was nothing else to be done.

The loss is great and evident. The dethroning of the State was a fatal blow to the old religion based on it, and to the old moral training of civic life. The forms might survive, but their power was withering. For the next six hundred years the world was using makeshifts

till it found a new religion. It was easy enough to manufacture gods, but very little religion encircled Antigonus or Demetrius, and such loyalty as gathered round them was Macedonian, not Greek. Cæsar stood on a higher level, as the incarnation of the glory of the world and Rome, and sometimes commanded real devotion, though perhaps the men who kept the image of Marcus among their household gods in Constantine's time gave their worship to the saint rather than the emperor. But Cæsar-worship never lost a taint of political expediency, and never became a genuine world-religion. The mysteries and the Eastern worships made a real advance in so far as they held out a promise of life after death, and may in some cases have had a good moral influence; but the amount of quackery and unreason mixed up with them made them impossible as a permanent religion. So philosophy was forced to undertake the work of religion as well as its own. Small blame to it if it proved a poor makeshift. However clearly it might speak, it lacked authority. The will of the immortal gods was a commanding motive, and appealed to common men; but even the philosopher could hardly respect in the same way the opinions of his fellows.

Nor was philosophy any longer a fearless and thorough search for truth in all its range. Disputers and parasites dressed out in the philosopher's cloak were scandal enough; but there was a deeper evil. The man of science, whose province is phenomena, is blameless if he takes his first principles at second-hand, provided he knows what he is doing: not so the philosopher, who

has no right to take anything whatever as a first principle if he can get behind it. But now the philosophers were content to assume that their first principles of ethics were sufficiently proved by the average opinion of the nations around them. They simplified their task, for nothing now remained but to shew how the individual was to work out these principles in private life. But they mutilated philosophy. One part of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle had nothing to represent it in that of Stoics and Epicureans; and unfortunately there was no possibility of thorough work without the missing part.

Greece as a whole was declining from the time of Cyrus to the Roman conquest, though the decline is masked by the dazzling splendour of Athens in the fifth century. It was very plain after the fall of Athens. The Peace of Antalcidas was even more shameful to Greece than Xenophon's retreat had been to Persia; and after the Macedonian conquest anyone could see that Greece was perishing for lack of men. The great armies of Pausanias and Archidamus were things of the past; and even the twenty thousand who repulsed the Gauls in 280 were half of them Aetolians. Now, a great and continuous decline of population is always the visible summing-up of a vast amount of moral or social unsoundness. There can be neither denial of the fact nor doubt of its meaning. Not only the State was in danger, but the very existence of the community was threatened. With the darkening outlook came a darker view of life. The word might still be, Let us eat and drink; but there was a new tone of sadness in the answer, For to-

morrow we die. It was as if the cupboard were opened at the feast to shew the skeleton. As death loomed larger, life grew poorer. Was it worth so much after all? So for the first time asceticism became a serious factor of Greek thought. There had always been traces of it, but now it became conspicuous, as in the constant endeavour of the Stoics to shew that the good and evil things of life are of no consequence to the wise man—which they could easily do by stripping them of their associations and refusing to look at anything more than their barest elements.

Nevertheless, the change was not pure loss. If the city-state was fallen, the individual remained; and if the great empires were artificial formations, mankind at any rate must be a natural whole. The Macedonian and Roman conquests did for the philosophers what the Assyrian invasions had done for the prophets, and the Chaldæan for Israel generally, by forcing them to look both inside and outside the old fences of national division,—inward on man as man, and outward for the first time on mankind as a unity. Something surely was gained when the teaching of history compelled them to reconsider the old dualism of spirit and matter, and the old preferences of speculation to practical life, and of the city to the citizen. Even if the city-state was the highest form of society, other forms also might have their advantages; and trial could hardly be made of them till the individuals who constituted it had been isolated for closer study, and recombined in a larger whole.

Epicureans and Sceptics will not detain us, for they

contributed very little directly to the conception of the knowledge of God. The Epicureans only softened the crude Hedonism of the Cyrenaics, and continued the old Greek search for the *summum bonum* in pleasure, while the function of the Sceptics was purely critical. It is otherwise with the Stoics. As the Epicureans went back to the atoms of Leucippus and Democritus, the Stoics returned to the primal fire of Heraclitus for the origin on one side of things that run their course and in the end return to it again, and on the other of those principles of unity in all things which reach their highest form in human reason, which is the image of the divine. True, everything that exists is material; but everything material is also spiritual, for spirit and matter are not two things, but two aspects of one thing. But if man's true self is a part of the divine, it follows with the Cynics that such true self is the highest object of his care; but it does not follow with the Cynics that it is best cared for by trampling down everything else. If the divine of which it is a part be the principle of order in the universe, it follows that true care of self consists not in setting at defiance the customs of society, but in following the order of the universe. Indeed, if self is fulfilled in relations to the universe, the rule of self and the rule of the universe must coincide. That which is reason in the individual is reason in other men, and the principle of order in the universe. Hence we have on one side the proud self-consciousness of the Stoic, on the other his wide human sympathy. He has reached the idea, first that there is a universal law, and then that the duty of following it is universal. In this

he contrasts with earlier philosophers, who scarcely pretended to speak to more than the select few. To the Stoic duty was as imperative to barbarians as to Greeks, though only the wise man fully recognized it. Further, this law was not an external command. It was expressed in the moral sense of mankind, and truly echoed in the wise man's heart, so that he found true freedom in serving it. However the world might go astray, the wise man was independent, and could always go his own way. If the struggle was after all too hard for him, suicide was a ready escape. "The door was open."

The Stoics had made a discovery when they identified reason in man with the principle of order in the world; and, like most discoverers, they seemed to think that their discovery explained everything. They reasoned as if the ideal was the actual, and made no compromises. They recognized no partial knowledge or partial virtue. They saw no continuity in character, but treated every act as an isolated decision. They allowed nothing for impulse and instinct, but judged every act as the result of deliberate reflection. Every act of the wise man was virtue, no act of the natural man. They laid down their principles, and carried them out without regard to consequences. Hence the pedantic and impracticable conscience which was the laughing-stock of the profane. Like the Puritan, the Stoic stood for seriousness in a frivolous world; and like the Puritan, he made himself ridiculous. Conscience first, said the Stoic; and the Christian agrees with him. Conscience last, says the ungodly; and the ungodly is to this extent right, that

the secondary authorities of custom, opinion, etc. are not lightly to be set at defiance. The only plea the final court will accept is that justice has miscarried in the courts below. The Stoics turned trifles into matters of conscience, and slighted the legitimate authority of custom.

But hence also the lofty sense of duty which made Stoicism the worthiest representative of religion in the age of Roman civil wars. It was a mixture of conscience and republican pedantry which put it in opposition to the Empire—an opposition which ceased when the Empire shewed a more legal and constitutional spirit after Domitian's time. In the second century it was much more of a republic than is commonly allowed, for the emperors (except Hadrian in his last illness) were largely guided by the senate. So Marcus was not very far out of his place as a Stoic on the throne.

The Stoic's conception of what *we* may call the knowledge of God was clear on two points. He recognized a principle of reason in the universe, and the same principle of reason in the duty of man. The self-consistency preached by Zeno was defined by his next successor, Cleanthes, as consistency with the nature of things. But having reached this illuminating thought, he was quite unable to work it out. It had to remain matter of faith. He presumed that the world is according to reason, but he entirely failed to shew that any of the things in the world are according to reason. Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam all have eschatologies which (if true) shew that some of them at least are according to reason; but Stoicism is as helpless as

the old polytheism. If the history of the world returns in cycles, it can have no such external purpose as is needed to give a rational meaning to the things of time. The later Stoics might drop the physical side of the philosophy, but still there was no ray of light on the thick darkness of the Whence and Whither. True, they have a general idea that good fortune, and still more bad fortune, is material for training; and this is a real advance; but they make it useless by subordinating it to their general doctrine of the essential indifference of outward things. We get clearly back to the ground of ignorance when the self is defined without regard to the relations of life which constitute its definition. Even more than the Christian, the Stoic walked by faith and not by sight. He had the same faith that the things of the world, the wilfulness of men excepted, are according to reason; but he never could render a reason for his faith—he had no doctrine of a risen Saviour to give him assurance full and final that so indeed they are.

The Stoic then began in faith that the divine is immanent in the world; but he so utterly failed to make his faith reasonable that we are not surprised to find the next great movements of thought swinging round to a purely transcendental God. They were the same in Greece and Israel; with Philo in spite of his Judaism, with Plotinus unreservedly, with the Christians in spite of the Gospel. Everywhere the degradation of the State from an ideal to a police was slowly forcing in on men the belief that the divine must be too great and distant for us to know it—at least directly, for in one

direction the Stoics had struck out a line of thought which the transcendentalists who followed them found helpful. The conception of a Logos or immanent reason in the world was not meant by the Stoics themselves to be more than an assertion of divine activity. But when the transcendentalist wave of thought swept over the world, it was felt that a God so distant and so high could not be supposed himself to touch the things of time, but needed a mediator. Such a mediator was supplied by the Stoic idea of a Logos or immanent Reason. But what was this Logos? Was it divine? and if so, in what sense? Was it personal or impersonal? This was the problem of the next age: and we shall see that Philosophy broke down before it, and Christianity itself could find no solution till the purely transcendental conception of the divine was abandoned at the Council of Nicæa.

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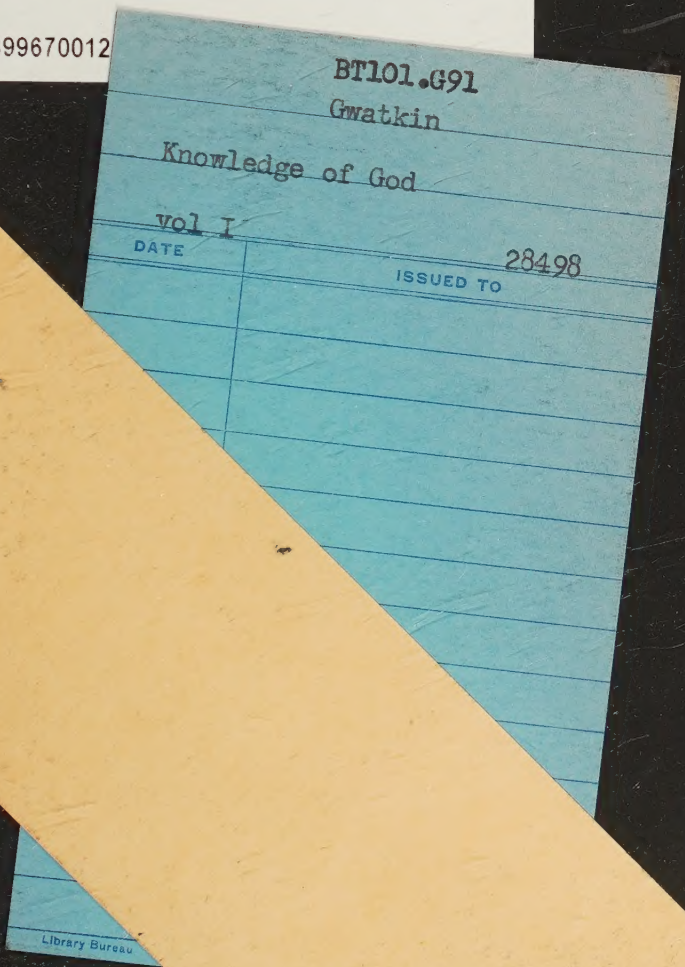
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